



“Neither mickling nor muckling” Northern Reflexivity in the Novels of the British “New Wave”

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“Neither mickling nor muckling”

Northern Reflexivity in the Novels of the British “New Wave”

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A Thesis in the Field of English

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Abstract

This study proposes that the novels associated with the early 1960s cinematic “British New Wave,” though popularly representative of Northern England, have suffered from under-reading with respect to place-specific identity. Contemporary journalistic construction of the “angry young man,” and subsequent working class-focused analyses obscured textual expressions of northernness available to readers for whom northern place provides “belonging.” Partly as a result of the social change upon which commentators fixated, northern identity was extremely visible in its articulation in the post-war years, and the “New Wave” corpus provides a rich resource for its continuing analysis. Would a specifically “northern” re-examination of the texts by an “insider” reader provide a novel interpretation of the works and their authors, as well as revealing the ways in which this identity is assumed and communicated? Through close reading of texts “of the north,” supported by reference to analyses of place and critical approaches to the novels, the study demonstrates the progressive rarefication of a self-conscious, “performed” identity that nevertheless constitutes a genuine expression of attachment to place. Furthermore, the works of the “New Wave” authors Braine, Sillitoe, Waterhouse, Storey, and Barstow negotiate changes in northern landscape and community, their fully “reflexive northernness” interrogating both itself and more “settled” modes of belonging. The “loud” northern voice characterising this literature of the 1950s and 60s resolved the incongruities of post-industrial regional identity to some extent, enabling a partial return to a still conscious, but quieter “just is” northernness.

Dedication

For my grandmother, May Mitchinson, 1917–2009. Back home in Sunderland.

To my parents, Ken and Stella, who were there.

And to the memory of Alan Sillitoe, Keith Waterhouse, and Stan Barstow, all sadly lost
whilst this study was in preparation.

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In Lancashire and Yorkshire ever since the world began,
This is the expression of the strong and silent man:
“Ee by gum!” “Ee by gum!”
The only thing he ever says is “Ee by gum!”
He says it when he’s happy, and he says it when he’s glum
He means an awful lot when he says “Ee by gum!”

—As performed by Gracie Fields

Chapter I

Introduction

Writers associated with the “cultural event” of late 1950s and early 1960s Britain (Hitchcock 21) represented variously in the literary and news media as a “New Wave,” “Angry Young Man,” “northern realist,” or “kitchen sink” movement suffered a double problem of interpretation. The bracketing together of novels featuring young, lower class, provincial, disaffected protagonists written by authors categorised similarly, engendered an overhyped and relatively short-lived literary phenomenon too closely identified with contemporary social changes and concerns. An overly sociological emphasis has tended to distort critical analysis of these novels, and as the “New Wave” receded, its representative texts were “relegated to the margins of the literary canon” (Russell 82). Subsequent works by authors brought to prominence by this cultural moment, particularly those maintaining a realist, provincial focus, have received surprisingly little critical attention (Laing 81).

Existing scholarship has adequately explored the genesis and eventual waning of the “New Wave” (e.g., Laing; Hitchcock; Ritchie), but reanalysis of the texts themselves has been minimal. The 1980s produced a number of class-focused readings more sophisticated in their approach than contemporary analyses anchored in the “aspirant working-class” paradigm, but it was not until the following decade that academic interest in “place” provided a framework for more innovative and fruitful interpretation. Geographers, sociologists, and practitioners of cultural studies have in recent years

investigated concepts of region, belonging, and identity—with such studies in Britain often concentrating on the enduring socio-cultural “North-South divide.”

Despite the situating of “New Wave” narratives in the North, their effective use of dialect, and the contribution to northern iconography by film versions of the novels, northern identity articulated within the texts initially received little attention.

Contemporary critics, journalists, and publishers presented the northernness of both the texts and their authors as a genre-defining element or marketing strategy. Northern towns, defined as “other” in relation to London, constituted exotically bleak, deprived landscapes within which characters played out narratives of despair, defiance, and escape.

Why, then, would a northern-focused reanalysis of the “New Wave” authors’ texts be a productive undertaking? Such a close reading of these novels could conceivably contribute to recent explorations of northernness in addition to further illuminating the texts themselves. If the socio-cultural moment of change in the late 1950s is posited as a vital point at which—partly as a result of the sociological currents identified at the time—northernness was extremely visible in its articulation, the “New Wave” corpus may provide an extremely rich resource for its continuing analysis. Can its texts be considered “icons of northern identity” in spite of the distortions of their “external” reception? Place studies have heightened interest in regional identity, and those discussing the North never fail to mention the 1950s “New Wave” as its modern literary and cinematic apogee. For the most part they have not, however, interrogated the texts to examine their essential northernness, distinct from their northern setting and authorship. Through such a reading of the key “New Wave” novels—*Room at the Top* (John Braine), *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Alan Sillitoe), *A Kind of Loving*, (Stan Barstow), *Billy Liar* (Keith Waterhouse), and *This Sporting Life* (David Storey) I hope to reveal the highly complex,

actively articulated northern identity that characterises these works. Braine eloquently describes a manifestation of what I want to call “northern reflexivity” in his later novel *The Jealous God* as “half-unconscious, half in jest” aptly summing up the genuine, yet self-aware and humorous expression of place-specific identity (48). The conscious use of dialect words, expressions (especially “stock phrases”) and structures, and a semi-humorous identification with the “grim” and the “ordinary” contribute to this projection of northernness. The thesis will investigate whether an “under-reading” of these novels coloured their initial reception, and if their current exclusion from wider literary history results at least in part from the omission of “place-based” interpretations of the texts. Such analysis, I shall argue, is available in its fullest extent to individuals within the community of northern author, characters, and reader. In addition, I will question whether such a subjective reading strategy can successfully negotiate the pitfalls of regional stereotype and cliché, both externally imposed and internalised by “insiders,” possibly via the very cultural products under examination.

In addition to studies of the “New Wave” cultural event mentioned above, contemporary critical reviews, writers’ autobiographies, and publishing materials including descriptive copy, jacket designs, and author bios will inform my analysis of the novels’ interrelationships with the social and cultural currents of the post-war period. Similar reference to the influential cinematic interpretations of the novels will also provide useful evidence regarding the popular consumption of these narratives and their expression of northern identity, though a comprehensive analysis of the films themselves is beyond the scope of this study. “The North” is a concept requiring exploration, and I shall draw on “place studies” along with selected examples of twentieth-century travel

writing to support my assertion that it is primarily a cultural rather than geographical construct.

Having located the texts in the cultural setting of the “New Wave” and established a working definition of “northern,” I intend to mine canonical “northern” writings in order to uncover instances of the “northern reflexivity” that is arguably a vital dynamic of the novels. Most “place studies” of the North identify three major manifestations of northern-focused textual expression in the modern period—“industrial” novels of the mid-nineteenth century (e.g., Dickens; Gaskell), 1930s “social commentary” (particularly Walter Greenwood’s *Love on the Dole* and George Orwell’s *The Road to Wigan Pier*), and the 1950s “New Wave” itself (Russell 81). In addition, I shall make brief reference to the “self-conscious” use of dialect in Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, and analyse in greater depth precursors of “New Wave” northernness in the “Movement” novels of Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis and John Wain. A close reading of the key “New Wave” texts in an attempt to demonstrate their profoundly expressed northern reflexivity will be integrated with similar analysis of the authors’ later, less well-studied novels, which, I shall argue, exhibit highly sophisticated and nuanced articulations of northernness in spaces that are post-“New Wave” and possibly even “post-northern.”

Analyses of the 1950s “cultural event” described above have tended to focus on social change associated with a new working class affluence, increased educational and employment opportunities, and a younger generation’s dissatisfaction with the morality and tastes of its predecessors. A secondary theme, the opposition of “province” to the metropolis, is also apparent, but its broad “non-London” definition denies location’s concrete “place.” Examination of critical works contemporary with the “New Wave” along with later analyses of the period will demonstrate this absence of (northern) place

and the reduction of northern identity to the generic “provincial” or crude stereotypes of an imagined North. The coincidence of northern and industrial proletarian identities presents a significant challenge, and it will be necessary to negotiate class-based readings of the “New Wave” in order to validate the need for a specifically northern reanalysis.

Richard Hoggart’s seminal 1957 insider-analysis of working class culture, *The Uses of Literacy*, can almost be considered a “New Wave” text itself. Drawing on his childhood in Leeds and subsequent relationship with the North, Hoggart’s study also provides insights into associated expressions of northernness. The work will be returned to throughout this thesis, but it is Hoggart’s self-identified figure of the “scholarship boy” that is key to situating the “New Wave” novels in the cultural event of the late 1950s. His nuanced and poignant depiction of the grant-educated working-class individual, never fully at ease with either his background or the middle class world of opportunity to which he has gained entry further illuminates the complexities of northern identity, but tends to get conflated with the more crudely-drawn figure of the “angry young man” simplified to provincial, lower-class dissenter. In this way, I shall argue, journalistic constructions compressed the northernness of the “New Wave” novels’ protagonists and authors into a generalised, one-dimensional “uncouthness.” Indeed, David Castronovo’s recent survey of the “Movement” and “New Wave,” *Blokes: The Bad Boys of English Literature* (2009), showed little progression from such a categorisation in its attempt to locate the authors and their protagonists in a British tradition of “blokishness.”

In 1958, Kenneth Allsop provided a review of the decade, noting that despite its overuse, the “angry young man” label accurately expressed the spirit of “dissentience” in recent literature characterised by “irreverence, stridency, impatience with tradition, vigour, vulgarity, [and] sulky resentment against the cultivated” (8–10). Leslie Paul’s 1965

retrospective on the “angry decade” similarly focuses on the “poor, but clever boy from the back streets” graduating from a provincial university and finding that British society remained far from a meritocracy (345). Critical and media discourse in this vein around Kingsley Amis’ first novel *Lucky Jim* (published in 1953), and the theatrical event of John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1957) also contributed to this angry young man / scholarship boy paradigm that confronted the novels of the “New Wave.” As Harry Ritchie argues in his persuasive analysis of the novels’ reception, the works and their writers were “distorted by and for the needs of glib punditry” (90), the prevailing social and political concerns around the “cultural event” being (mis)-read into texts identified as its standard-bearers.

A dominant attribute of the oversimplified scholarship boy figure revolves around the notion of escape—typically from a lower class and / or provincial background. The ruthlessly ambitious Joe Lampton of Braine’s *Room at the Top* (1957) provided prime material for such a reading in his pursuit of socioeconomic status and apparent disdain for his northern, working class origins, whilst Waterhouse’s Billy Fisher is one of many northern protagonists who dreams of embarking on an exhilarating new life in London (*Billy Liar* 1959). This “escaper” aspect, whilst adding a dimension to class and generational discord, is again overextended to a broad societal phenomenon when conceived in terms of a placeless “provincial,” or worse, an undifferentiated provincial lower class. Severed from the subtleties of northern identity, notions of “the flight to London” or “the stifling provinces / working class” have tended to brand the novels. “New Wave” cultural event-based criticism also subjected the texts’ predominantly lower class, northern authors to similar characterisation, particularly when they “made good” as a writer or left the North for the literary capital of London. This is particularly apparent

in the marketing of “New Wave” novels by publishers—author biographies often deliberately echoing the fictional narrative. The escaper aspect is certainly an identifiable motif in the texts, though it requires the more nuanced analysis of writers such as Gillian Mary Hanson, who underlines the complex existential “escapes” within Alan Sillitoe’s works, and Phillip Dodd, whose concept of the “Lowryscape” questions the authenticity of the “New Wave” texts’ representation of northernness.

Later analyses of the post-war cultural event have successfully challenged social trend-determined interpretations of the novels—D. J. Taylor’s 1993 survey highlights simplistic readings driven by perceptions of fiction as social criticism, and the artificial grouping of authors into literary groups of questionable validity. Taylor also distinguishes between the ineffectual, humorous rebellion of the “Movement” novels—Amis, Wain, and Larkin were also referred to as the “university wits” since they were Oxford-educated but savaged the cultural elite in their early works—and the “next wave” of genuinely working class fiction. As noted above, the former novels’ success, particularly Amis’ *Lucky Jim*, sparked popular interest in “angry young” writers, but also submerged them in the distorting morass of the “New Wave” cultural event. Stuart Laing’s discussion of the late 50s and early 60s novels takes this point further, situating Braine’s *Room at the Top* as the text linking the educated “Movement” heroes with the more realistic, serious, and northern-asserted working class characters inhabiting the works of Sillitoe and Storey (62). Laing’s work is crucial in situating the texts in what he terms the “closed community” of working class reality, and highlighting their depiction of the individual, humanised actualities of changes to this traditional culture. His argument for the eventual waning of interest in realistic depictions of often dull and unedifying lives is also persuasive—the “double bind” of critics expecting authors such as Sillitoe to branch out, yet expressing

dissatisfaction when they deviated from their assigned role as narrator of the northern working class (81). A slightly earlier collection of essays on working class fiction, edited by Jeremy Hawthorn, examines the relations between realism and working-class fiction in more detail, focusing on many of the core “northern” twentieth century novels to which I shall refer. The incidence of plain-speaking, deprecating humour, and dialect usage identified in these essays on working class writing and the “self-reflexive” elements that I have associated with northernness will be, as I have noted, a complex and problematic interrelation.

An excessively class-based reading of the “New Wave” novels is apparent in Nigel Gray’s early work *The Silent Majority* (1973), an unusual piece of writing promoted by its publisher in a manner reminiscent of the 1950s “cultural event” itself. General Editor Michael Egan describes the book as “free from cumbersome scholarly apparatus,” allowing us via the author’s “sense of life” to “see through to the experience itself” (Gray 7). The resulting polemic is delivered in a colloquial, non-scholarly style, mixing observations from the author’s own working class childhood with lengthy quotations from the key “New Wave” novels. Gray’s anti-authoritarian premise is notably devoid of references to the North and northernness.

Analysing Sillitoe’s short story “The Good Women” along with both the text and film versions of his breakthrough novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Peter Hitchcock approaches the close-reading strategy that I hope to bring to the texts in this study. His identification of the late 1950s “cultural event” has been a useful conceptual framework for this thesis, and he also suggests that the “angry” phenomenon’s promotion of “opposition from the margins” actually afforded media access to previously unrecognised working class fiction (32–3). Hitchcock bases his analysis of Sillitoe’s language on

Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, and notes the "heteroglossia" of variant styles and meanings in working class language, positioned in relation to hegemonic social structures. The work also discusses the shared linguistic community of working class authors, characters, and readers, and the oppositional power of non-standard language styles in the narrative, but fails to elaborate on the specific northernness of the text and its language. Despite Hitchcock's detailed reading of Sillitoe's text, I remain convinced of a gap in interpretation that must be addressed via a specifically northern- rather than just working class language-based exegesis of "New Wave" writing. Again, the problem of distinguishing between the two is paramount.

Before proceeding with this "insider" analysis of the novels, I should qualify my own relationship to place and elaborate upon the rationale behind a study of place-based identity and belonging. As a northerner born in the late twentieth-century my attachment is typically fragmentary, having grown up in the Black Country of the West Midlands, attended university in West Yorkshire, and spent my early working life in Lancashire and Staffordshire. Adding to this compound bonding, my paternal grandparents had roots in Tyne and Wear—the "Far North" of England. It was not until moving to Leeds as a young adult that I was particularly conscious of the importance of place to identity, but that abrupt exposure to a diversity of accents and regional dispositions brought locality to the fore. A Midlands background positioned me in contested space relative to the polarities of North and South, and this sense of ambiguous belonging intensified as I forged subsequent attachments to northern place. Nevertheless, the patchwork northernness that evolved from these multiple connections suggested a cohesive "northern identity" might underlie regional particularity. In 2001 I settled in the United States where my accent, subsumed into "British" (or occasionally Scottish!) acted to

obscure rather than project my identity. Northernness failed to resonate with a non-English audience, and compelled to communicate the significance of my attachment to place, I became increasingly aware of the “performed” yet still genuine nature of that expression. This brought to mind the highly self-conscious depictions of northernness within the 1950s “New Wave” novels, suggesting a productive literary source for the analysis of its essence and mechanisms.

Chapter II

“Eh, you’re mucky but I love you”: Northernness and the North

Where, then, is the English North as particular space, and what qualities confer northernness on a place and its people? “North” is obviously a relative position, and as Susanne Schmid notes, northern space conceivably begins “north of the South” though such definitions against the South tend to diminish the North’s own identity (349). Nevertheless, a meaningful rereading of the “New Wave” novels with a focus on place-specific identity necessitates their location in a concretely defined north. This must be coupled with a concept of northernness sufficiently broad to function as a pan-regional identity, yet attentive to the heterogeneity of “many norths.” The region’s spatial boundaries and defining characteristics are complex and often contested, and I will assess various geographical and descriptive models of northern England in order to mark out this space for my study. With our compass calibrated, the more nebulous concept of northernness can then be explored and delineated.

The north-south dividing axis resonates strongly in the English psyche, possibly approximating national distinctions between the individual countries comprising the British Isles. That there is no partition of similar significance between the west and east of the country suggests that the concentration of political, commercial, and cultural power in the southern metropolis of London and its vicinity may be instrumental to the North’s separateness. Plotting the dividing line is problematic as noted above, but in the popular imagination the “Watford Gap” has come to signify the locus of geographical and

cultural division. Historically, this minor break in the landscape near the Northamptonshire village of Watford has provided an effective conduit for north-south transportation routes, including the M1 motorway connecting Yorkshire with London. However, the precise locale (often confused with the town of Watford fifty miles further south) is less important than its function as a descriptor of the fissure between the two Englands. Northern English speakers often use variants of the phrase “best (fish and chips) this side of the Watford Gap” to extol the merits of the local, whilst southerners, such as author Charles Jennings, may express their disdain for those “on the wrong side of the Watford Gap” (n. pag.). A recent *Observer* article exploring Britain’s enduring rift reported that “[m]ore than seven million Britons have never ventured across the nation’s north-south divide, with two thirds of southerners claiming the north is ‘bleak’ and half of northerners assuming that southerners are arrogant snobs.” (Hill). For Londoners in particular, “north of Watford” appears to indicate the limits of civilisation and the beginnings of a “bleak and unsophisticated” foreign land (Jennings). As a shorthand representation of discontinuities between England’s north and south, the Gap’s importance is evident, but this single border-post insufficiently demarcates northern space and offers little around which to construct a self-defined northern identity.

Topographical features, regional and county borders, and broad cross-country dividing lines have all provided geographic bounding for an English north. The southern extent of the Pennines—the backbone of low-rising mountains extending from Derbyshire to the Anglo-Scottish border—constitutes a material transition from the southern lowlands, and as Helen Jewell argues in her analysis of the divide’s historical roots, may have contributed to differing social structures derived from geologically-determined forms of agriculture (9). Jewell demarcates a geographical northern space

“from Humber to Mersey, with attention to the Trent between them” asserting that such a border would have been “generally accepted as the beginning of the north of England, when travelling north, or the end of it, when travelling south, for more than a millennium” (24–5). In his study of northern identity, Dave Russell acknowledges the reality of “many norths” but excludes the Trent-side counties of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Staffordshire from his more focused “seven county” model (16), whilst the frequently-referenced Severn-Wash dividing line encloses much of the problematic Midlands space within an English north.

Such dividing lines also feature in socio-economic demarcations of north and south. The University of Sheffield’s Social and Spatial Inequalities Group observed that maps presenting data such as life expectancy, unemployment rate, and access to higher education exhibited a “cliff” of disparity along the Humber-Severn line (Dorling), and many analyses of the English North concentrate exclusively on such indices of deprivation. David Smith boldly states in his analysis of Britain’s divide that “it is a reasonable contention that most North-South differences arise from economic factors” (3). Consequently, he locates the Midlands firmly in the South as a result of the region’s post-war prosperity (5).

Any attempt to circumscribe a geographical northern space inevitably raises questions of inclusion and uniformity. Do instances of northern and non-northern space transgress the dividing lines? To what extent does northernness vary according to locale and across urban versus rural space? What ambiguities are associated with border regions rendered as such by the proximity of the north-south axis? Jewell nuances her broadly defined region, identifying county-based “far,” “middle,” and “near” norths exhibiting “quite different degrees of northernness in feeling as well as geography and climate” (24),

whilst SASI's Danny Dorling draws attention to the fractal nature of the dividing line and incongruities such as prosperous, verdant Cheshire: "places which look and sometimes act like the south" whilst remaining part of the North. Clearly, the North is practically defined by its northern location, but its northernness is not solely a property of those geographical coordinates. To negotiate these various dividing lines and justify a northern space appropriate to the "New Wave" texts requires examination of additional aspects of the English North. Industrialism and its associated urban working-class culture provide the crucial overlay required to define these northern landscapes.

The northern-centred Industrial Revolution obviously had profound economic and social consequences, but it is the influence of industrialisation and urbanisation on the landscape that I wish to advance as a marker of distinctly northern space. The proliferation of factories, mills, mines, and ironworks, and the growth of densely populated urban centres based around manufacturing physically transformed northern landscapes and shifted relationships to that space for those both within and outside the region. Partly as a result of its harsher climate and more rugged topography, the North had often been portrayed as wild and forbidding, but the uncompromising brutality of these industrial edifices and the associated despoliation of natural spaces engendered a northern iconography of pervasive and lasting influence. Engagement with the sullied and uninviting environment via the bond of belonging contributes to the "grim" aspect of northernness that I shall identify within texts "of the North."

This is not to suggest that northern identity was indistinct prior to the advent of industrialism, rather transformative upheavals in the land and its people's psyche tempered a particularly vivid North and northernness still recognisable and relevant today. Helen Jewell's study presents persuasive evidence supporting an identifiably

northern consciousness that predates the Industrial Revolution by centuries (207–8), and cautions that though highly visible and divisive, industrialism was far from being the originator of north-south disparities (212–3). In his essay on the relation of the north-south divide to industry, Phillip Howell emphasises the struggle between the regions for “representativeness” over the course of the nineteenth century, “questions of inclusion and exclusion, centrality and marginality” constituting competing assertions of Englishness (82). Howell reminds us that contemporary perspectives tend to reduce the north-south divide to the rise and fall of northern prosperity associated with manufacturing (65). However, his suggestion that by the end of the nineteenth century the South had largely reclaimed the locus of national identity through a recasting of the North and its industrial landscapes as barbarous and ugly (87) provides important context for my assertion that negotiation of the “grim” contributed to an intensified twentieth century northernness.

A similar concentration on the region’s exclusion from the English quintessence is apparent in Stephan Kohl’s work, in which he details the strategies by which modern travel literature has described and defined the English North. I shall return to the works of key and contemporary writers in order to explore proposed models of north and northernness, but Kohl’s more comprehensive analysis provides useful insight into the rural–urban aspect of northern space. He identifies a tendency to present the North in opposition to the “true England” found in the South: a timeless garden idyll embodying the essential “goodness” of English tradition (97). Rural northern landscapes are acknowledged to possess a lesser beauty of their own (99), but such spaces are remote and inaccessible (97) and subject to inhospitable climatic conditions (105). More interestingly, such writers attributed the North’s loss of Englishness to a “careless concession to the

demands of an industrialised age” (97). Accordingly, the ugly, industrial, urban landscapes of northern manufacturing towns embody the antithesis of an Englishness centred upon a utopian southern pastoral. Yet as Kohl notes in his concluding chapter, the banishment of the “harsh” North from a southern-defined England presented the opportunity to define a positive northern identity in contrast to an “enfeebled” South. This oppositional northernness ascribes pragmatic, down-to-earth qualities such as resilience, communality, and a lack of pretence to the “uncivilised” inhabitants of a blighted space (111). Yorkshire author J. B. Priestley depicts this interplay of grim northern place and identity perfectly in his 1930s travel narrative *English Journey*: “Between Manchester and Bolton the ugliness is so complete that it is almost exhilarating. It challenges you to live there. That is probably the secret of the Lancashire working folk: they have accepted that challenge” (207).

At this point, a north appropriate to the “New Wave” texts can be advanced. Clearly, the loosely defined non-London “provincial” employed by many critics of the novels provides insufficient commonality within which to explore northernness as a distinctive identity, whilst broad cross-country dividing lines and county borders arbitrarily exclude legitimate northern spaces. The interplay between industrialism and contemporary northern landscapes and identities was discussed above, and as Dave Russell and others have noted, representations of rural northern spaces such as the Romantics’ Lake District and the Yorkshire moors of “Brontë country” have rendered these more celebrated locales “somehow not quite of the North” (34). Russell employs the early twentieth-century Ruralist appellation “Black England” to denote the bleak, industrial, urban north as depicted by Victorian novelists such as Gaskell and Dickens, distinguishing these “literary geographies” from the more “English” space of the northern

rural (86–7). It is this interleaving of landscape and identity within the northern literary corpus that designates “north” for the purposes of this study. The North as “Black England” includes any urban space located roughly above the inclusive Humber-Severn line whose landscape exhibits evidence of industrial defilement. Within texts “of the North,” place-specific identity finds expression in part through interaction with such spaces.

This definition places the Midland region within the North, neatly aligning the industrial heartland of the Black Country with corresponding areas lying farther north of the dividing line. To exclude the region to which “[a]lmost all the iconography (as well as the hagiography) of early industrialism is firmly tied” (Billinge 98) would not only problematise the relation between the despoiled landscape and twentieth-century northernness, but also disengage significant texts by Sillitoe, Wain, Lawrence, and Bennett from a common literary north. Stephen Caunce’s description of an “urban ring” of conurbations extending across the “conventional border between the English North and Midlands” (50) also lends support to a definition of north not solely based on geographical location. Caunce perceptively captures the complex heterogeneity of an urban north defined by “a set of strong and very local identities that nest inside each other like Russian dolls” (49).

Within this non-polar and decentralised northern “Black England” I shall identify and explore three interrelated characteristics of northernness, supported by reference to place studies and travel writing depicting the region. Though, as Russell indicates, aspects of northern identity have become ingrained within the national “common sense” (36), it is the *active* expression of these traits within the “grim/ordinary/northern dialect” complex that will inform my close reading of novels both prior to and within the British “New

Wave.” Before addressing these “Black England texts,” I shall also attempt to justify the validity of a northernness coloured by the interactions of an “insider community” of authors, readers, and characters with textual and visual representations of the North.

We have already mentioned the “grim”—the first aspect of northern identity that I wish to examine—in defining a North centred on the bleak urban industrial, but additional expansion and validation of the concept is necessary. In its general aspect, the “grim” encapsulates strategies by which individuals negotiate the harsh, ugly environment—be it physical or situational—by means of black humour. However, this expression is complicated by its interaction with a seemingly contradictory “humble pride” which I shall term the “ordinary,” and the purposeful utilisation of dialect; the second and third elements of my proposed northernness. The “grim” is not simply a self-deprecating joke intended to lessen the pain of an otherwise dire circumstance, but an articulation of identity bound to place by pride of belonging and subtleties of local idiom. As suggested by Kohl’s work, the sense of attachment to an ostensibly unlovely space is in part motivated by a defiant demonstration of northern hardiness against the received disparagements of the South—an attitude perceptively expressed by George Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937): “Sheffield, I suppose, could justly be called the ugliest town in the Old World: its inhabitants, who want it to be pre-eminent in everything, very likely do make that claim for it” (106). However, this attachment to the grimness of the local is tempered by the more unassuming attitude of “putting up with things,” typified by the stock phrases Richard Hoggart records in *The Uses of Literacy*. Such everyday utterances as “if y’ don’t like it, y’ mun lump it” and “we’re short of nowt we’ve got” (76–7; ch. 3) richly illustrate the intersection of grim humour, pride in the ordinary, and vernacular eloquence in the expression of northern identity.

A fundamental traversal of Black England by means of the “grim” involves engagement with the dirt of northern industrial space. The observations of travel writers confronted by both Black England and its citizens provide useful illustrations of the practice. Orwell, though a southern “outsider,” proves cognisant again of northern self-conscious grimness; remarking that “many of the people in Sheffield or Manchester, if they smelled the air along the Cornish cliffs, would probably declare that it had no taste in it” (108). On reaching Sheffield in the course of his own English tour, Priestley notes “with the increasing smokiness of the air, [the sun] made a strange chiaroscuro, as Northern as high tea and the proper short ‘a’ sound” (121), conjoining the dirt-filled atmosphere with the homeliness of the family meal and welcoming resonance of the familiar Yorkshire accent. Writing in the early 1960s and thus contemporary with publication of the “New Wave” texts, Bolton-born journalist Geoffrey Moorhouse records an episode that illustrates the mechanism of the northern “grim” with exceptional effectiveness. Travelling by train to his home county of Lancashire, he observes a sailor who “opened the window, surveyed the damp slates and decaying back streets of Ardwick, inhaled more obviously than he need have done, and observed ‘Eh, you’re mucky but I love you.’ ” (113). Moorhouse notes that his fellow passengers appeared to quietly approve this acknowledgement of the “grim,” explaining that “in Lancashire you have from time to time to declare your love, or view someone else’s declaration with sympathy, both to justify to yourself your continued presence there and to demonstrate to others that you weren’t thinking of ratting on the place” (113–4). This perceptive analysis affirms the role of the “grim” in avowals of belonging to the hometowns of Black England on both individual and communal levels. The northbound sailor’s exclamation is more than merely humorous or nostalgic—he acknowledges Ardwick’s dirtiness yet claims it as

home, transforming it via dialect to a northern “muckiness.” As a result of this “grim” transaction Black Lancashire is rendered as a homely, familiar north in contrast to the beautiful yet remote regions of the county’s rural Lake District (114). For Moorhouse and his fellow Lancastrians, dirt is regarded as “a necessary coating to the real values of life which lie beneath it” (115). Stuart Rawnsley expands on the role of dirt in northern identity in his essay “Constructing the North” (published 2000), noting the embodiment of middle class northernness in the newly rich manufacturer who “made money out of the grime of the urban landscape” (8). This pragmatic pride in the “grim” and awareness of its potential value is also evident in the northern colloquialism “where there’s muck, there’s brass.”

I have proposed the term “ordinary” to denote the binary of “humble pride,” and shall now situate this second aspect alongside the “grim” as a device by which northern identity is asserted. We have already touched upon the reframing of nominally unsophisticated, provincial characteristics as exemplary northern values such as common sense, practicality, and forthrightness, but the mechanisms by which these qualities are articulated requires exploration. In addition, the topic of working class culture must be addressed—an aspect of industrialism that contributed to the populace’s northernness just as its material constructions blackened northern landscapes.

As Russell comments, “[n]otions of the North as essentially industrial and proletarian clearly run deep” (81) and undeniably, iconic elements of working-class culture provide a buttress to modern northern identity. Industrial specialisation, according to Rawnsley, was a major factor in intensifying northern regional identity and cohesion, and the “potent symbols” of miner and weaver solidified a culture proud in the nobility of its labour (7–8). Richard Hoggart’s masterful depiction of traditional working-

class life is markedly based on his own upbringing in the northern city of Leeds, and whilst remaining mindful of the need to differentiate northernness from class, the core characteristics he describes serve as a useful framework within which to outline the “ordinary.” “Home” constitutes the foundation of working-class life, embodying the warmth and security of family, the comfort of honest food, and the dominion of “our mam,” the working-class mother. Hoggart emphasises the ordinariness of home and food—“sober: not chintzy or kittenish or whimsical or feminized” (28). “Neighbourhood,” characterised by homogeneity, totality, and intense localisation entirely bounds the wider world (46–7), and that which is outside it is regarded as “strange and often unhelpful” (57). However, it is within the working-class oral tradition illustrated by Hoggart that expression of this homely, down to earth ordinariness is achieved. He notes the everyday usage of “old phrases” that retain a kernel of meaning and provide comfort (18), communicating “a hypnotic and final effect, the sound of revealed truth” (86). The centrality of dialect to northern identity will be my third point, but this northern-based localisation of the “ordinary” through the “stock phrase” or aphorism requires initial examination. Such phrases can evoke the unaffected wisdom of a northern community: “don't meet trouble 'alf-way” (76), or challenge supposed superiority, for example in dismissing the appeal of an overtly attractive individual: “Ah'd rather 'ave a good meal anyday” (16). Both aspects exhibit the complex of humility and pride characterising the “ordinary,” but when employed as a defensive retort, an element of mocking humour akin to the “grim” response intensifies the projection of northernness. A northern individual's own “ordinary” credentials can be expressed in an apparently self-deprecating fashion with the intent of asserting the worthiness of the unremarkable against an ostentatious other. This is particularly acute in the relationship of the

“unhappily superior” scholarship boy, educated out of the orbit of his parents and peers (Hoggart 263). Numerous performances of this kind of northern ordinairiness are evident in the texts of the “New Wave” writers—often themselves elevated above their northern communities by literary success.

In his own writing, Moorhouse provides an outstanding example of the deflating humour that Priestley noted as a Lancastrian quality in *English Journey*: “an impish delight in mocking whatever is thought to be affected and pretentious” (Priestley 200). Quoting from “a national newspaper” to illustrate London’s disdain for the uncivilised North, he transcribes: “I was eating a moussaka in Bolton the other day which (though nice) was made of potato, and it suddenly made me realize how little you can take aubergines for granted out of town.” His rejoinder positively swaggers with “ordinary” northern impudence: “At a cocktail party in South Kensington the other week I was toying with a pâté finger which (though edible) was not very satisfying, and it suddenly made me realize how little you can take for granted a good chip buttie outside Lancashire” (23).

Moorhouse positions the homely, ordinary, buttie, with its prominent northern “u” sound against the foreign and fanciful aubergine that cannot but sound affected when pronounced. The northern “ordinary” rendering of exotic moussaka as tasty Lancashire hotpot stands in contrast to the insubstantial, effete, and barely palatable pâté finger “toyed with” by London partygoers.

We have noted the humorous nature of both the “grim” and “ordinary” aspects of northernness, and it is perhaps surprising that identity should find expression via the comedic. I have attempted to stress the oppositional component of this identity to the subjugation of northern place and way of life by a south defining itself as pristinely English and culturally sophisticated, and humour is often an effective medium for such

incursions. In addition, these facets of northernness have a genuine function in binding individuals to place, and attributing worth to local lifestyle and traditions. Nonetheless, Dave Russell makes the important point that the comic utilisation of the “grim” and “ordinary” North in such representations of identity may be turned back on the region by outsiders who “simply add it, consciously or not, to their store of northern imagery” (272), failing to understand the nuances of the performance. I concede that this is likely, particularly given the obfuscatory effects of dialect, but regardless of whether such articulations are ultimately successful in defining the North in the “national imagination” (163), the expression of northern identity is of primary importance within the “insider community”.

If northern identity is expressed in part via incorporation of the “grim” and “ordinary,” what distinguishes it from the culture representative of comparably bleak and working-class areas such as London’s East End? As I have suggested, a third element—northern dialect, encompassing accent, vocabulary, and stock phrases—interweaves each expression of these related cultural manoeuvrings, and as Katie Wales remarks, “dialect is consciously emblematic of regional and social identities” (132). Conveniently aligning the core elements of the “grim” and “ordinary” with dialect, Wales notes “[j]ust as with landscape or custom, a linguistic feature which is potentially a source of ridicule or condescension to an outsider, can be a source of pride to its speaker” (31). Her analysis of the sociocultural relevance of northern English dialects includes north-south distinctions we have already encountered, such as the “linguistic divide” between the short northern “a” and the long southern “a” (20), and the historical subordination of provincial speech forms to a southern-centred “Standard English” (4). But I am particularly concerned with actively verbalised dialect here: words, phrases, and their characteristic pronunciation.

Consciousness of the characteristic inflections and colloquialisms of regional speech is fundamental not only in binding the speaker to locale and community but also in honing demonstrations of place-based identity. We have observed how northern “grim” and “ordinary” pronouncements rely on dialect in signalling identity to outsiders and communicating a nuanced credential of belonging to the insider community, but the *texture* of demotic speech can itself present opportunities for complex articulations of northernness. This can range from the simple exaggeration of accent or the use of obscure vocabulary to assert northernness against a southern recipient, to the pleasurable communality provided by mutual comprehension of “coded” insider exchanges. In his recent work discussing the “true” North, journalist Martin Wainwright perceives the poetics of dialect in characteristically northern grammatical constructions such as “that chair wants mending,” noting that “[t]he more delicately nuanced they are, the greater the pleasure” (90). Instances of both natural and deliberate dialect usage are prevalent in northern textual works, and their interpretation is central to understanding the intricate expression of northernness. Similar interchanges between northern author, reader, and character within the fictional northern communities of the “New Wave” texts will be afforded by the close analysis of those works identified in this thesis.

The “Black English” northernness that I have proposed is anchored firmly in aspects of northern place and character largely perceived to be “common sense” even in the face of social and cultural change and the reconstitution of post-industrial northern landscapes. Blackened urban spaces dense with smoke-spewing factory chimneys and inhabited by an industrial working-class populace communicating via a shared, regionally-specific dialect would appear at best to serve as an archetype against which to assess textual representations of northernness. However, I maintain that what I shall call a

“core north,” shaped in part by literary and cinematic discourse, constitutes a genuine nucleus of northern identity around which expressions of diverse and particular northernness have been negotiated since the beginning of the industrial age. The germ of authentic north in the semi-humorous articulations of northern dialect, the “grim,” and the “ordinary” is also discernable in this collective Black English epitome. Nevertheless, the North so defined is highly vulnerable to problematic stereotyping, particularly from more coarsely drawn outsider perspectives. Richard Hoggart remarks on the temptation to romanticise a “pastoral” working-class in literature, though aspects of northernness also resonate within the typical depictions he describes. Northern dialect and ordinariness are clearly evident in representations of “patronisingly flattered little men with their flat caps and flat vowels” who are “rough and unpolished, but diamonds nevertheless” (5).

Expanding on this theme, Phillip Dodd provides a compelling critique of received impressions of the North, arguing that the “Lowryscape” constitutes an “agreed iconography” of a conceptual rather than place-specific north. The early twentieth century artist L. S. Lowry’s stark representations of northern industrial landscapes are not only emblematic of a prototypical north, but also contribute along with other visual and textual constructions to a shorthand depiction of northern place and identity. Dodd notes the complex and contradictory interactions between actual and representational norths on which I am focusing, but finds the retrospective dynamic of the latter highly problematic. For Dodd, “the ‘North’ of the present continues to be haunted by an earlier ‘North’ which it cannot escape” (26–7), and that bygone north is indelibly industrial in nature. “Escaper fiction” produced by deracinated northern writers stamps a “settled northernness” onto place and people; interaction with this and preceding literature utilising industrial and working class imagery to establish a “true north” affords the means

of preserving a lost north both for the disconnected escapee and inhabitants of a post-industrial space temporally separated from traditional values and ways of life. The dependence of outsider and escaper literature on fixed “Lowryscapes” thus risks the exclusion of dialogue with an actual, changing north (27). Referring to Dodd’s article, Suzanne Schmid perceptively sums up this challenge to an essential Black northern identity: “Within the boundaries of this imagined community, a northern type of Englishness can be construed, which is retrospective in its outlook. If industrialisation once was a threat to human health and well-being, its leftovers now serve as a backdrop for visions of a social cohesion no longer available in a post-industrial age” (360). What then, can be salvaged from a model northernness based on industrial grimness, working-class ordinariness, and traditional dialect usage? The answer, I believe, is evident in northerners’ engagement with this primary Black North. As already suggested, northern identity is actively performed—the “grim” and “ordinary” complexes articulated by means of measured dialect usage in a humorous yet fully “authentic” manner. In applying this admittedly subjective latter term, I am attempting to indicate the legitimacy of such expressions in the context of a northern “insider community.” Evolution of this “northern reflexivity” can be traced from the industrial novels of the Victorian period to the “New Wave” northern fictions, reaching its most nuanced representation in the later “post-northern” novels of the 1950s writers. This peak of northern literary self-reflection coincided with changes in society detailed by contemporary “sociological” readings of the novels, but is not reducible to the generational and socio-economic dissent portrayed by these critics. Rather, I would argue that members of northern communities were themselves engaging with a changing north and asserting identity in an increasingly self-conscious mode, attempting to navigate post-industrial space via a “performed”

northernness. Geoffrey Moorhouse lends support to this notion of material reflexivity in his observation of the “ordinary-dialect” complex in action: “Take half a dozen Yorkshiremen and it will be surprising if within ten minutes most of them have not become plain. A whole sheaf of local sayings has codified them” (146). The implied “bringing together” underscores the communal and conscious assertion of identity by northerners that Moorhouse encountered in the course of his own “English Journey” in the early 1960s. He notes that in common with those other quintessentially northern talismans the cloth cap and the whippet, use of such Hoggartian stock phrases “as serious responses” tends to be restricted to the middle-aged and elderly, but that “they are not rare remarks from young people, used in a knowing, winking way; the rejoinder of one who is deeply conscious of his environment and is prepared and expected to play up to it” (146). This, I feel, encapsulates the conscious, playful, yet genuine “northern reflexivity” evident in texts “of the North”—particularly those of the “New Wave” writers.

“Reflexive,” which I am employing as a portmanteau word to encompass the range of northern performance, requires some unpacking before we examine its expression in the texts. The term’s contradictory dual sense captures the enacted yet genuine nature of regional identity, aligning deliberate declaration of self with more instinctual, spontaneous expression. In addition, the two meanings provide a continuum between an apparently “natural” state of “reflex” northernness, and the highly performed, self-conscious “reflexive” identity that I have proposed as characteristic of the “New Wave” novels. “Reflexivity” thus expresses both the self-referential quality of articulations of identity, and the capacity or inclination for such performance. A less common meaning of the word also describes the facility to deflect or turn something back, and this is of

utility in describing the oppositional quality of intensified projections of the “grim,”
“ordinary,” and dialect.

Chapter III

“Willful black dreariness”: Texts “of the North” preceding the “New Wave”

In order to demonstrate the singular expression of reflexive northernness characterising novels of the British “New Wave,” articulations of identity within earlier northern-focused texts must first be examined. Interpretation of dialect usage and manifestations of the “grim” and “ordinary” constitutes the primary focus of this analysis, but depictions of northern place and their contribution to a conceptual North are also of utility to a “history of the idea.” In addition, close reading of these works exposes interactions available within the “insider community” of northern author, reader, and character, providing essential context within which to survey the development of northern reflexivity. Points at which text interfaces with north offer insights into characters’ relative consciousness and demonstration of place-based identity via an authorial discourse with readers that is dependent on those parties’ own relationship with northern place. A highly selective mining of the novels will therefore concentrate on these nexuses between the tripartite northernness outlined in the preceding chapter and text as dialogue between writer and reader in particular relation to the North. Beginning with the mid-nineteenth century “industrial” novels *Sybil*, *Hard Times*, and *North and South*, the genesis of a Black English literary North will be explored before turning to the works of consciously “insider” northern authors Arnold Bennett, J. B. Priestley, and Walter Greenwood. The multi-layered use of dialect within D. H. Lawrence’s novels *Sons and Lovers* and particularly, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* arguably constitutes the most highly nuanced

expression of northernness in the early twentieth century literary corpus, and considerable attention will be paid to his characters' self-awareness of place-based identity. Finally, *Kiddar's Luck*, a novel by neglected Newcastle author Jack Common, will be situated as a potential bridging text to the "Movement" and "New Wave" novels of the latter half of the century.

As Dave Russell notes, the Victorian urban industrial novel, drawing on deep-rooted outsider perceptions of an essentially uncivilised north, disseminated a "Black English" literary representation of the region characterised by bleak and despoiled landscapes and a similarly benighted populace (87). Situating the North as "other" to a cultured and unspoilt England of the South, was as we have seen from travel literature of the period, typical of the "interloper" author writing the North for readers similarly externalised by region and class (Cunningham 39). In common with the travelogues discussed by Kohl, fictional renderings of northern place contributed to an exotically harsh literary topography. In his comprehensive study of writing and regionality, Stephen Wade discusses the "hyperbole of industry" characterising these mid-nineteenth century novels that cast the North as a panoramically Black outlands (19).

Constructions of northern place in Disraeli's *Sybil* provide a vivid illustration of this florid depiction of the dismal, particularly in the case of his imagined, superlatively Black town Wodgate, where "the sound of the hammer and the file never ceased, amid gutters of abomination, and piles of foulness; and stagnant pools of filth; reservoirs of leprosy and plague" (142; bk. 3, ch. 4). Disraeli's apocalyptic language, whilst intended to highlight the poverty and squalor of England's "other nation," inscribes the North with an overblown hyper-blackness beyond the reach of "grim" negotiations potentially available to the novel's characters. Inhabitants of *Sybil's* hellish northern spaces are

effectively subsumed into the supra-grim landscape, reducing individual characters to an animalistic adjunct. As Disraeli's miners emerge from the coal-pit at day's end "[t]he plain is covered with the multitude: bands of stalwart men, broad-chested and muscular, wet with toil, and black as the children of the tropics" (120–1; bk. 3, ch. 1). This industrial savagery is strikingly aligned with pre-Christian Northern European tradition in the description of Wodgate as "a district that in the old days had been consecrated to Woden, and which appeared destined through successive ages to retain its heathen character" (139; bk. 3, ch. 4), further embellishing the novel's alien and barbaric North. Moreover, the crucial interstitial functioning of dialect within this overly "grim" and "unordinary" space is curtailed by Disraeli's rendering of speech in a curious *mélange* of pan-regional working-class demotic. For the insider reader, characters do not communicate with a recognisably northern flavour; though speech is coarsened to approximate the characteristic ordinariness of the North, transcribed pronunciations frequently resonate with a dissonant and even southern tenor. Though Disraeli incorporates and glosses the authentic vocabulary of "the mining districts" (123; bk. 3, ch. 1), these nuggets of dialect remain inaccessibly buried in the colliers' synthetic speech. Northern identity is therefore barely accessible within *Sybil*, its north baroquely blackened out of the "ordinary's" scope and characters tongue-tied by dialect of doubtful regional origin. Conceivably, the "Disraeliscape" offers a parodic North against which to exercise the "grim" in its more humorous aspects, and the author himself appears to satirise outsider conceptions of the North through Lady Marney's disparaging description of the manufacturing town Mobray: "You never have a clear sky. Your toilette table is covered with blacks, the deer in the park seem as if they had bathed in a lake of India ink; and as for the sheep, you expect to see chimney-sweeps for the shepherds" (65; bk. 2, ch. 6).

An exaggeratedly comedic North is also evident in *Hard Times*, immediately signalled by the Dickensian appellation “Coketown” for its northern location. Like Disraeli’s Wodgate the town is luxuriantly Black, with “interminable serpents of smoke,” “a black canal,” and “a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye.” Northern barbarism is similarly inferred, industrial grime besmirching the town with “unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage,” in which characters “equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound on the same pavements, to do the same work” are submerged and obscured (17; bk. 1, ch. 5). Though Dickens’ portrayal of Josiah Bounderby as the model blustering, hard-headed industrialist is deliberately overstated, the character arguably articulates his northernness in spite of the outsider author’s intended grotesqueness. Repeated self-identification with northern space—“I’m Josiah Bounderby of Coketown”—along with measured proclamations of ordinariness communicate consciousness of a place-specific disposition, and his speech, though not encumbered with the awkward phonetics Dickens employs to mark lower class characters such as Stephen Blackpool, seems to become enveloped with authentic dialect once absorbed by the insider reader. The “humble-proud” binary is evident in Bounderby’s performance of the “ordinary,” as he warns “[d]on’t you deceive yourself by supposing for a moment that I am a man of family. I am a bit of dirty riff-raff, and a genuine scrap of tag, rag, and bobtail” (97; bk. 2, ch. 2), and his depiction of his rise to fortune “like a maggot into a nut” (129; bk. 2, ch. 7). Additionally, in reaction to the southern gentleman Harthouse, he advances the “grim” of Coketown in demonstration of his northern identity: “First of all, you see our smoke. That’s meat and drink to us” (96; bk. 2, ch.2). Expressions of northernness within the novel are admittedly insubstantial and potentially reducible to class-based discourse, yet the broadly sketched figure of

Bounderby does seem capable of degrees of reflexive sensibility within the equally stark locality of Coketown.

Though also writing for a largely middle class and metropolitan audience, Elizabeth Gaskell's first-hand knowledge of Manchester is reflected in the more sympathetic and nuanced rendition of northern place and identity apparent in her novels. *North and South* hinges on the familiar opposition of southern pastoral and metropolitan refinement to northern despoliation and barbarousness, yet Gaskell presents a less monochromatically Black North within which more elaborate expressions of identity can be achieved. Stephen Wade has noted that the novel affords its northerners a distinct consciousness, "a different mode of being, a bundle of manners and customs, attitudes and beliefs so removed from the Home Counties that Gaskell has to explain a confrontation as if she were a guide to an alien species" (26). Whilst the presentation of the North to an outsider audience still tends to exoticise place and people, the narrative lends an agency to its characters with the potential to sustain manifestations of reflexivity within the text. Although blackened indelibly by its location in "Darkshire," the explicitly situated town of "Milton-Northern" does not utterly suffocate its inhabitants' identities as stygian Wodgate did, nor subject them to Coketown hyperbole. Higgins consciously asserts northern resilience in contrast to the supposedly "spiritless" and "downtrodden" southern workers: "now it's not so here. We know when we're put upon; and we'en too much blood in us to stand it" (181; ch. 17). Even recounted via the outsider voice of Fanny, Mrs. Thornton's "grim" negotiation of her hometown is evident: "She is very proud of Milton; dirty smoky place, as I feel it to be. I believe she admires it the more for those very qualities" (140; ch. 12). In a rejoinder to southern notions of an uncivilised

north, her husband appears to recast barbarism into a noble, Viking-like culture of “ordinariness,” virtually engendering a distinct “racial” Northern Englishness:

I belong to Teutonic blood; it is little mingled in this part of England to what it is in others; we retain much of their language; we retain more of their spirit; we do not look upon life as a time for enjoyment, but as a time for action and exertion. Our glory and our beauty arise out of our inward strength, which makes us victorious over material resistance, and over greater difficulties still. (413–4; ch. 40)

Gaskell’s exposition of positive aspects of the North via Margaret’s geo-cultural and emotional journey could, as Wade remarks, be illustrative of a newly emerged industrial elite at the peak of its success rather than a particularly northern identity (27), and the practical, down to earth capability of the “ordinary” is common to both northernness and the working class culture as already noted. The novel also positions a dynamic, masculine North, personified by Thornton, against Margaret’s sophisticated, genteel and feminine South. Dialect usage then, is key to assessing the degree to which *North and South* provides a prospect for distinctly northern expressions of identity. Writing from within the northern insider community, albeit for a predominantly externalised readership, Gaskell’s rendition of dialect appears somewhat more authentic than that of her contemporaries. In his survey of “non standard English” in literature, N. F. Blake comments on Gaskell’s “restrained” representation of northern speech (151–2), though I would agree with Christoph Schubert’s observation that orthographical conventions such as apostrophes indicating missing letters and distortions of spelling mark dialect as “deficient” and obstruct the process of reading (81). Moreover, for the insider reader, otherwise recognisable and identity-affirming vocabulary is distorted and rendered unfamiliar. Deformations introduced by outsider writers or by those explaining the North to an outsider audience invariably diminish the expression of identity by characters and

the nuanced communication available within the insider community. Textual representation of the spoken word is inevitably problematic, and as we have seen, authentic stock phrases and dialect terms offer greater potential than the attempted transcription of voice. In general, the Victorian “industrial novels” are all deficient in their presentation of a realistically expressed northern speech that would animate fully reflexive expressions of regional identity. As Wade comments, accurately used, language imparts “a unique local sensual perception of experience” (18–19). It is perhaps in Gaskell’s portrayal of the encounter between northerner Higgins and southerner Mr. Hale that dialect-based identity is most tellingly expressed. Though Higgins sanitises himself appropriately for the appointment, the distinguishing “muck” of his northern voice remains ineradicable: “He had ‘slicked’ his hair down with the fresh water; he had adjusted his neck-handkerchief, and borrowed a candle-end to polish his clogs with; and there he sat, enforcing some opinion on her father, with a strong Darkshire accent, it is true, but with a lowered voice, and a good earnest composure on his face” (288; ch. 28).

Writing in the early years of the twentieth-century, Staffordshire-born Arnold Bennett constructed his literary representations of the Potteries as an “escaped” insider residing in London. In common with earlier writers’ portrayals of the North, his works principally attempt to explicate the northernness of his home region to the “targeted readership” of the metropolitan middle class (Wade 4), though more sophisticated expressions of northern identity are available to both Bennett’s characters and the insider reader. The northern landscapes of *Anna of the Five Towns* are Black as those of any Victorian industrial novel, Bennett describing his thinly disguised Potteries settlements as “mean and forbidding of aspect—sombre, hard-featured, uncouth; and the vaporous poison of their ovens and chimneys has soiled and shrivelled the surrounding country” (9;

ch. 1), but the author and his characters' "grim" negotiations of these spaces are markedly enriched. Though Bennett's writing may partially subvert the humorous aspect of the grim for the purpose of entertaining his wider readership, as within the "grim" compound itself, identity remains communicable to the insider reader. This is particularly evident in the depiction of Anna and Henry's evening walk together as they gaze across a landscape adorned with "the skeleton-like silhouettes of pit-heads, and the solid forms of furnaces and chimney-shaft. In the distance a canal reflected the gigantic illuminations of Caldron Bar Ironworks. It was a scene mysterious and romantic enough to kindle the raptures of love" (157; ch. 12). Superficially the northern self-deprecatory framing of a comedic Black idyll, Bennett demonstrates how the "ordinary" can de-gild the pastoral romantic by means of a northern "grim" recasting for individuals bound to this space. Such a breathtakingly Black vista truly inspires sentimentality, albeit enclosed within the "grim" complex of acknowledged ugliness reconciled via dark humour. Author, reader, and characters seem to converge at this grim juncture, surpassing the Lowryscape with a shared northern consciousness of blackness wryly navigated, honest emotion, and attachment to locale.

The promotion of a particular place-bound northernness within Bennett's works is key to the establishment of an insider community conducive to the expression of northern identity. The short stories collected in his appropriately titled collection *The Grim Smile of the Five Towns* are characterised by the repeated assertion of a Midlands-situated northernness, which although acknowledged as outlandish to outsider sensibilities constitutes a proclamation of distinctiveness and belonging by characters populating the text, and manifestly by Bennett himself. The author's affection for his fellow Midlanders is discernable in "The Silent Brothers" in which he depicts the region's character as "a

fearful and strange compound of pride, obstinacy, unconquerableness, romance, and stupidity” (30). Identifying himself more explicitly with the community in “Beginning the New Year,” Bennett deftly illustrates the self-aware and humorous expression of northern ordinariness: “some of the instances of our stolidity and our taciturnity are enough to astound. They do not, of course, astound us natives; we laugh at them, we think they are an immense joke, and what the outer world may think does not trouble our deep conceit of ourselves” (95). The “ordinary” is particularly prominent in Bennett’s textual North—from the humble pride of the wealthy ceramics manufacturer in “The Murder of the Mandarin” who insists “that there is no longer any money to be made out of ‘pots’ ” (63), to the Halls’ profoundly understated performance in “Beginning the New Year” by means of which they resolve his lengthy absence in “Merica.” This supremely sparse but affecting exchange, punctuated by “aye” and “well, well” concludes with an “ordinary” resumption of their married life just as it was before (100–1). “Grim” articulations are also accessible to a greater extent than within earlier texts “of the North” as noted earlier, “The Baby’s Bath” providing an example of distinctively northern negotiation of adversity. With, as Bennett remarks “true Five Towns directness of speech,” a local resident rebukes the municipal electricity department following a major power cut: “What’s th’ meaning o’ this eclipse as you’m treating us to?” (29). This “grim” exclamation relies heavily upon dialect for its resonance with the insider reader, which leads us to a consideration of Bennett’s utilisation of and engagement with northern speech.

Though dialect renditions in Bennett’s writing tend to exhibit similar obscuring phonetic and orthographic conventions as those of the Victorian novelists and consequently impede communication to the insider reader, his own participation within

the northern community enhances these exchanges. Whilst overly dense dialect representations may reduce northern characters to a spectacle for the outsider audience's amusement, Bennett also perceptibly speaks to and for the sensibilities of his native region. Dialect functions in *Anna of the Five Towns* partly to mark the parental generation's more traditional northernness, but finds more nuanced expression in the similarly comparative context of the short story "From One Generation To Another," in which the heavily accented speech of canny Uncle Dan challenges the standard dialogue of his newly wealthy young relatives. The old man's "grim" laced performance of the "ordinary" to demonstrate his generation's modest superiority is animated by dialect thickly laid on by both character and author, resulting in a spirited and enjoyable exercise of northern identity for the community of insiders:

when I left th' Five Towns fifty-two years sin' to go weaving i' Derbyshire wi' my mother's brother, tay were ten shilling a pun'. Us had it when us were sick—which wasna' offen. We worked too hard for be sick. Hafe past five i' the morning till eight of a night, and then Saturday afternoon walk ten mile to Glossop with a week's work on ye' back, and home again wi' th' brass. They've lost th' habit of work now-a-days, seemingly. (105)

Perhaps Bennett's most insightful communication of northernness, "The Death of Simon Fuge" details the London-based narrator's experience of the Five Towns. The insider author initially employs the southern character Loring to expose external perceptions of the North, yet affords him an almost northern acuity over the course of his interactions with his indigenous hosts, the Brindleys. A degree of fusion can be felt in prospect of this "escaped" author (Bennett) presenting a northern locale to an outsider readership, and his textual complement (Loring) venturing into an alien landscape and culture. Bennett, exploring northern place through southern eyes, also transmits an outsider perception to an insider readership with which he shares a comprehension of the

North inaccessible to Loring at the narrative's outset. The author tempers his narrator's preliminary dismissal of Black England with an "ordinary" aside to his northern compatriots as he invests Loring with nascent northern sensibility:

I had never been brought into contact with the vast constructive material activities of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Staffordshire. I had but passed through them occasionally on my way to Scotland, scorning their necessary grime with the perhaps too facile disdain of the clean-faced southerner who is apt to forget that coal cannot walk up unaided out of the mine. (116)

Similarly, Bennett interleaves Loring's overly emphatic Blackening of the Potteries landscape with a parallel "grim" voice that skews the drama of his narrator's summation for the insider reader: "It was squalid ugliness, but it was squalid ugliness on a scale so vast and overpowering that it became sublime ... I do not think the Five Towns will ever be described: Dante lived too soon" (119). Gradually, the author attunes Loring to northernness, expressing the pleasurable poetics of dialect available to the insider community through an externalised character that conceivably occupies a similar vantage point to its escapee creator. Loring observes that Mrs Brindley

pronounced the word 'once' with a wholehearted enthusiasm for its vowel sound that I have never heard equalled elsewhere, and also with a very magnified 'w' at the beginning of it. Often when I hear the word 'once' pronounced in less downright parts of the world, I remember how they pronounce it in the Five Towns, and there rises up before me a complete picture of the district, its atmosphere, its spirit. (121)

Bennett, through Loring, underscores the intimate resonances of northern speech for the insider audience, but also demonstrates the confluence of dialect, place, and belonging decisive in expressions of northern identity, along with the representative quality of "ordinariness" that resolves the story. The London press lauds the deceased artist of the title, but he is relegated in favour of the football report in his native Five Towns. Loring remarks on this grim-tinged, ordinary refusal to fuss, comprehending the dynamic of

northern reflexivity through Bennett's overlay of insider consciousness: "They joke with such extraordinary seriousness in the Five Towns that one is somehow bound to pretend that they are not joking" (158). It is this Bennett-Loring synchrony of voices that arguably encapsulates the author's position as explicator to the South, and insider correspondent to the North. As Stephen Wade notes, Bennett "had the task of turning a very unattractive area of spoilheap and potteries into a human place where people formed relationships and discovered their inner sense of identity despite the formidably puritan and life-denying utilitarianism of their environment" (48). Bennett's fiction significantly advances the negotiation of Black northern space by means of a distinctly northern agency.

We have already encountered J. B. Priestley's self-reflective explorations of Black England in his travel narrative *English Journey*, but his earlier novel *The Good Companions* (1929) recounts the parallel expedition of a textual Yorkshireman, Mr. Oakroyd. Though the narrative is intentionally comic and its northernness broadly drawn, the insider author conveys a robust regional identity in characteristically bluff and forthright Yorkshire fashion. Priestley's narrative around the text is particularly demonstrative of his own reflexive northernness, but Oakroyd's exaggerated taciturnity often necessitates such authorial commentary in order to articulate the character's regional identity. Oakroyd represents an archetypal and arguably "Lowryscaped" northerner, but remains largely Priestley's creation and only rarely affirms his individual agency.

In common with Bennett, the author presents a distinctive and place-bound northernness, in this case propagated by the land itself: "These windy moors, these clanging dark valleys, these factories ... have between them bred a race that has special characteristics" (2; bk.1, ch. 1). The bleak/Black Yorkshire landscape moulds both the physical and linguistic forms of its inhabitants who are "stocky," hold themselves "very

stiffly,” use “emphatic consonants and very broad vowels,” and “always sound aggressive” (2; bk. 1, ch. 1). Emphasising the particularity of this space and people, Priestley positions his tough northern town of “Bruddersford” against a softer, pastoral south where “we have quitted the long war of the north” and “man has forsworn his mad industrial antics” (40; bk.1, ch. 2). “Grim” negotiation of the novel’s Black landscapes is evident, but Priestley largely accomplishes this through his asides to the reader rather than allowing Oakroyd to articulate this aspect of his identity within the textual narrative. For example, the author humorously distorts his own Black depiction of Tewborough by means of the “grim”. Recounting the Midlands manufacturing town’s decline, he describes its industrial legacy: “but a few public buildings in a bad Gothic style, two bewhiskered and blackened statues, some slag heaps, disused factories and sidings, a rotting canal, a large slum area, a generous supply of dirt, rickets, bow-legs, and bad teeth” (406; bk. 2, ch. 6). Oakroyd, though present in this textual Black space, becomes virtually an instrument of Priestley’s “ordinary” expression of northern identity as the author remarks that he is “not hypercritical being from Bruddersford,” though the character eventually manages to articulate this ordinariness himself, cutting through the Black extravagance with “it’s a right poor do” (409; bk. 2, ch. 6).

Instances of ordinariness recur within the text, often attributed to the entire Bruddersford community. The town’s “Black Swan Inn” is “known locally as t’Mucky Duck” (11; bk. 1, ch. 1), northern identity and belonging bestowed by the ordinary’s affectionate deflation and the insertion of characteristically northern broad vowels when vocalised in dialect. Priestley depicts a heroically phlegmatic Oakroyd, accentuating the humorous elements of the “ordinary,” but as mentioned, seldom permits the character’s performance to communicate by itself. When Oakroyd parts from his southern

acquaintance Joby Jackson, it is the author who provides the blackly humorous thread within the ordinary: “‘I hope I see thee agen afore so long.’ He held out his hand, feeling that he might go to any lengths now after such a desperately emotional speech” (153; bk. 1, ch. 4). Priestley further glosses Oakroyd’s “ordinary” projection of northernness as the character negotiates the emotional excess of the South. Having “tried to mumble some words of thanks,” which, as the author points out is “an agonising task for any true Bruddersfordian,” Oakroyd’s tersely ordinary utterance communicates with eloquence to the insider reader. However Priestley embeds his character within a humorous and “ordinary” articulation of his own, which, though explicatory for his general readership, lacks the aesthetic quality of Oakroyd’s northernness:

Mr. Oakroyd himself had always regarded with suspicion any persons—not counting affected southerners and the like—who showed a readiness to say ‘Please’ and ‘Thank you,’ and was genuinely troubled afterwards by the thought that perhaps his travels were already sapping his manly independence and might lead him to indulge—as he said himself—‘in all sorts o’ daft tricks.’ (151; bk. 1, ch. 4)

Though dialect rendition in *The Good Companions* is somewhat cumbersome in its presentation, the overstressing of Oakroyd’s pronunciation serving to both mark his speech and accentuate its comedic aspect for the outsider audience, Priestley’s dialogue generally rings true in terms of vocabulary and expression. Furthermore, the author’s sensitivity to the functioning of dialect in manifestations of northern identity is clear, this being one benefit conferred by his otherwise obtrusive presence in the text. The natural, low-reflexive thickening of dialect as a result of emotion is perceptively portrayed as Oakroyd mulls over life’s meaning: “‘Ah’ll tell tha what it is, Jess,’ said his companion, pointing the stem of his pipe and becoming broader in his Yorkshire as he grew more philosophical” (7; bk. 1, ch. 1), and again when his fellow Bruddersfordian Mr. Ashworth

reassures him that he is not wanted by the police: “ ‘Nay,’ he concluded in his broadest accent, ‘they’ve summat better to do than bother wi’ thee, lad.’ ” (366; bk. 2, ch. 4).

Priestley also employs the southerner Jackson to point out the poetic quality of Oakroyd’s dialect to the outsider reader, though the beauty of the Yorkshireman’s spontaneous composition would not be lost on a northern audience. Employed on a fairground stand selling rubber toys, Oakroyd manages to sell a stork, a policeman, and a baby, which he reports as “a bird, a bobby, an’ a bairn for fower bob” to Jackson, who consequently dubs him a “a ruddy poet” (144; bk. 1, ch. 4). Though little reflexive use of dialect is apparent in the text, Priestley accomplishes his own grim-accented reflections on northern speech, in this case Oakroyd’s acknowledgement “Na Jim!” “This ‘Na,’ which must once have been ‘Now,’ is the recognized salutation in Bruddersford, and the fact that it sounds more like a word of caution than a word of greeting is by no means surprising” (6; bk. 1, ch. 1).

The novel is essentially a light hearted and affectionate portrayal of Priestley’s own northern home and identity, and is unsurprisingly limited as a textual space in which that identity can find authentic expression. The text serves primarily as a vehicle for the author’s own enjoyment of northernness, and though this is also available to the reader, the residents of Bruddersford are afforded little consciousness of their regional identity. The un-northern prolixity of the authorial voice brings to mind Priestley’s admission in *English Journey* that belonging to the West Riding of Yorkshire, he is unable to praise the area and its people in his travel writing. His concluding admonition, a compound of “ordinary” and dialect, is pertinent to the author of *The Good Companions*: “So—well, I’m off. Behave thi’sen lad!” (161).

Love on the Dole, Walter Greenwood’s 1933 depiction of Depression-era Salford, presents a significant challenge to a place-focused analysis of northern texts. Though the

author's representation of his hometown resonates authentically with the insider reader, expressions of northern identity are scarce within the novel's "closed community," as Stuart Laing has termed such insular working class networks (77). This silence results partly from Greenwood's desire to present acute contemporary social problems to a middle-class readership in a highly realistic, not to say naturalistic, manner, concentrating on the poverty and despair of a community blighted by unemployment. The narrative's harsh situations should provide ample opportunity for grim-tinged negotiations, yet its characters seem to exhibit a northernness that though realistic and natural, is lacking in self-awareness. Only the self-educated socialist Larry Meath seems aware of Hanky Park's location relative to the wider world, and as Greenwood largely does, relegates any northern identity to a consciousness of class: "Hanky Park is not the whole of England. In every industrial city of the land you find such places as this, where such people as us who do the work of the world are forced to spend their days" (86; pt. 2, ch. 3).

Greenwood's dialect constructions contribute to his naturalistic representation of northernness, though as several commentators have noted, in making the North's "strange other-lands known to the rest of the country" (Cunningham 39) the author introduces distortions that I believe hinder his characters' communication of identity. Ronald Paul comments on Greenwood's interruption of dialogue with "translations" clearly offered for the benefit of the outsider reader, yet interprets this "marring" of the novel in terms of class rather than place-based identity. For Paul, the author's appeal to a middle class readership reduces his characters to contrived objects of pity (35). Such parenthetical explanations are certainly jarring, particularly when implanted within a character's speech, as is the case with Mr. Hardcastle's otherwise northern-ordinary stock phrase: "What we can't pay for cash down we'll do bout (without)" (92; pt. 2, ch. 4).

Greenwood's efforts as an "insider editor" arguably highlight such utterances for the insider reader, who having already participated in the character's dialogue unaided, gains affirmation of distinct northern identity against the outsider trailing a step behind. When executed by the characters themselves, this glossing of dialect terms seems almost delivered with a wink to the northern reader. However, as Roger Webster observes in his essay on the novel, the "transcription of Harry's thoughts is not in dialect, whereas his spoken words are" (53), Greenwood's presentation of his characters' internal voice introduces major fractions of identity. In a similar manner to Paul, Webster attributes this to contradictions implicit in class and the literary process (54) rather than drawing attention to the problematic disjuncture of northern identity resulting from this convention. As with the Victorian outsider writers, orthographic issues also deform characters' communication at times, an extreme example being the reduction of Ned Narkey's dialect to concurrent single syllable utterances: "You an' y' bloody talk. You've got it comin' t' y', s'elp me" (135; pt. 3, ch. 2). The insider reader could almost fancy the reprimand directed by character to his creator.

Does *Love on the Dole* then offer any space for self-reflexive performance? At least two instances of northern "subversive play" by author and characters are conceivable. After hearing Meath delivering a political speech—rendered without dialect by Greenwood—Sally Hardcastle becomes "very conscious of the loose way" that she speaks (86; pt. 2, ch. 3), and later attempts to correct her brother Harry. Her successive sentence and amendment of her own speech lapses immediately into the idiomatic, northern expressiveness that defines her true identity: "And don't say 'mek,' it's 'make.' Oh, I've no time to muck about—I mean, mend collars for nobody" (89; pt. 2, ch. 3). Dialect also provides a vehicle for the assertion of identity in an encounter between Meath and

Narkey—whose surname could be read as Greenwood’s insider skewering of Dickensian nomenclature, “narky” meaning bad-tempered or disparaging in northern dialects. The ostensibly villainous Narkey expresses contempt for his rival’s decorous, educated speech, thereby questioning his lost northern identity: “Ach. The bloody edge you put on makes me sick ... Who the ’ell d’y’ think y’are?” (134; pt. 3, ch. 2).

Graham Holderness comments in his essay on representations of the miner in literature that D. H. Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* presents a highly naturalistic portrait of the working-class community against which the socio-economic aspirations and conflicts of the novel’s characters play out. The insider author demonstrates an intimate knowledge of “the community’s whole structure of feeling” and his proximity to its textual inhabitants renders the narrative “free from any deviation into the mysterious and inexplicable; and there are no embarrassed contortions of explanation addressed to the reader” (24). Though Holderness positions class as the primary factor differentiating the overly Black, exilic fiction of “bourgeois” writers such as Disraeli from the integrated narratives communicated by their “proletarian” counterparts (21), his observation is pertinent to a place-based reading of the literature. Lawrence’s Nottinghamshire- and Derbyshire-located novels arguably deliver a highly authentic textual northernness lacking in works “of the North” produced by or addressed to external parties.

As is the case in Greenwood’s realistic portrayal of his Salford community in *Love on the Dole*, Lawrence’s 1913 novel affords its characters limited occasion for self-reflexive performance of place-based identity; but the author’s sensitivity to dialect encourages numerous instances of verbal expression that serve to illustrate the natural functioning of northern speech. Indeed, Lawrence’s own dialect occasionally seeps into the narrative voice, conceivably reconnecting the author to the novel’s traditional insider community:

“They were half way down their first cup of tea when they head the sluther of pit-boots” (46; pt. 1, ch. 2). Though transcribed dialogue is sometimes too densely rendered for the insider reader to engage with easily, variations in the dialect’s texture effectively communicate the social and psychological nuances of its usage. Walter Morel’s thickly northern speech binds him closely to place and tradition, yet he appears aware of its localised rightness in relation to exterior varieties of English, for example his mimicry of the aspirational pit-manager’s “fat, squeaky voice, with its attempt at good English” (25; pt. 1, ch. 1). When drunk, Morel wields this alien pronunciation against his wife’s refined, southern speech: “‘Is there nathing to eat in the house?’ he asked, insolently, as if to a servant. In certain stages of his intoxication he affected the clipped, mincing speech of the towns.” His subsequent, uncontrolled temper causes him to revert to natural dialect: “Then tha should get the flamin’ thing thysen. Tha should get up like other women have to, an’ wait on a man” (52–3; pt. 1, ch. 2). His son William, emotionally closer to his mother, exhibits a dialect marked only by dropped leading and terminal consonants, and which is erased altogether by his later education. Morel’s fellow colliers mock the younger son Paul for his own fanciful learning: “nowt but algibbra an’ French” (96; pt. 1, ch. 4), and he in turn disparages them as “hateful and common” as indicated by their use of dialect: “Mr Braithwaite drops his ‘h’s’ an’ Mr Winterbottom says ‘you was’ ” (97; pt. 1, ch. 4). Such generational dilution of dialect is unsurprising—as John Honey notes in his study *Does Accent Matter?*, education tends to induce movement towards speech forms considered prestigious (54)—but Lawrence’s use of accent to mark this distancing from the traditional unambiguously signals an alteration in these “escaper” characters’ relation to northernness, a device also prevalent in the “New Wave” novels.

A more organic fluctuation in speech is evident in the “relaxation” into dialect exhibited by this category of characters during episodes of heightened emotion. In the company of his lover Beatrice, Arthur Morel “liked to lapse into the dialect” just as he “unhook[s] his tunic collar,” releasing himself from the discipline and expatriation of the army (287; pt. 2, ch. 9). The educated, urbane Paul demonstrates similarly instinctive dialect usage when comforting Clara: “ ‘But tha shouldna worrit,’ he said, softly pleading” (356; pt. 2, ch. 12). Norman Page has noted a “deliberate” reversion to or intensification of dialect by Lawrence’s characters (71), and though I would maintain that these expressions do not constitute fully reflexive performances of identity, they do reveal the core of northernness present within these individuals. Perhaps the most illustrative and affecting instance of sentimental dialect reversion is sited within Paul’s murmured address to a retired pit-horse at the Leivers’ farm. The intimate reconciliation between “stool-harsed Jack” escaper clerk (70; pt. 1, ch. 3) and noble, labouring “collier” also recalls beloved childhood stories of “down pit” told “warmly” in dialect by his father (89; pt. 1, ch. 4): “Well Jimmy my lad, how are ter? Nobbut sick an’ sadly, like? Why then it’s a shame, my owd lad!” (208; pt. 2, ch. 7). Once again, the Hoggartian “scholarship boy” attempts to reaffirm his claim to a northern identity rendered complex by spatial and social separation from the north of his origin.

For Holderness, Lawrence’s later novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* portrays a working class alienated by labour and industrialism (25), and the disaffected belligerence exhibited by its protagonist Mellors against the Wragby aristocracy coupled with the author’s arrestingly Black depictions of northern space lend considerable weight to a class-based reading of the novel. However, Mellors’ nuanced articulations of dialect are central to the work, and I would argue, constitute more than a generic “lower class vernacular” in their

expression of place-specific identity. The character's measured use of dialect exhibits the deliberateness noted by Page much less equivocally than was the case with the characters of *Sons and Lovers*, and Lawrence markedly confronts his audience with a consciously articulated northernness.

At the outset of the narrative, the author explicitly positions Lady Chatterley as a geographical outsider to the Derbyshire coal community, in addition to the obvious separation afforded by her class: "Connie was accustomed to Kensington or the Scotch Hills or the Sussex downs: that was her England" (13; ch. 2). The Black English landscape of Tevershall that "alas" encroaches on the Wragby estate actively expresses its northern grimness, drawing on Lawrence's hyper-Black descriptions of a village that "trailed in utter hopeless ugliness for a long and gruesome mile" with a "willful black dreariness" (13; ch. 2). Such unlovely visions appear attributable to Connie's own perception, and in the hands of the insider author, this condemnatory, external view of the north offers his associated readership access to "grim" ownership and oppositional identity. It is conceivable that Lawrence is himself indulging in "grim poetics" in his lurid portrayals of soot falling "like black manna from the skies of doom," and the "suphureous combustion of the earth's excrement" (13; ch. 2), though intriguingly, "New Wave" author Alan Sillitoe attributed these "industrial clichés" to the author's disconnection from the local landscape as a result of his European exile in his study "D.H. Lawrence and His District" (43–4). For Connie, however, there is no possibility of engaging with this northern space, and she banishes it from "her England" in customary fashion: "she took in the utter soulless ugliness of the coal-and-iron Midlands at a glance, and left it at what it was: unbelievable, and not to be thought about" (13; ch. 2). Imprinted with northern place, Tevershall's inhabitants are "as shapeless, haggard, and dreary as the countryside, and as

unfriendly,” and the speech that distinguishes them appears outlandish and almost bestial: “something in their deep-mouthed slurring of the dialect ... was terrible and a bit mysterious” (14; ch. 2). Explicit depiction of place-based identity is apparent in Lawrence’s augmentation of the class divide between Wragby and the village: a rift “such as is perhaps non-existent south of the Trent. But in the Midlands and the industrial North, gulf impassable, across which no communion could take place” (14; ch. 2).

This situating of a north that is “other” from the perspective of both outsider marginalisation and insider belonging is common, if in differing balance, to all of the texts “of the north” discussed thus far, but as noted, it is the intricate use of dialect in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* that distinguishes the novel as a profoundly self-reflexive communication of northern identity. As Margery Sabin has noted, Lawrence and his characters seem to utilise dialect confrontationally, both in the narrative’s surface class antagonisms and the author’s own relation to literary culture as a “provincial” novelist of the “lesser ranks of English society” (7). Sabin remarks upon Lawrence’s “bold, even violent, repudiations of conventional English” (8) and Mellors’ attempts via dialect to “oppose and discredit the entire language of standard English as nothing but bourgeois cliché” (16). Sociolinguist Roger Shuy has also analysed relationships of power associated with Mellors’ “code switching” from dialect to non-inflected speech, but insufficient attention has been paid to engagements afforded to readers within the shared northern community of the novel. As I shall argue, though Mellors’ reflexive articulations of northernness are not unproblematic, Lawrence’s text offers significant insights into the conscious performance of localised identity.

Connie’s initial exposure to the Tevershall dialect is marked by an awareness of the “humble-pride” aspect of the “ordinary” that we have already proposed as

instrumental to expressions of northernness. Lawrence presents this as a non-reflexive attribute of the dialect itself, a “stubborn, instinctive—We think ourselves as good as you, if you *are* Lady Chatterley! ... which she always heard twanging in the women’s half-fawning voices” (15; ch. 2). Encountering Mellors for the first time, she perceives his use of dialect as a graver insult due his intentional shift from unaccented speech: “His voice on the last words, had fallen into the heavy broad drag of the dialect—perhaps also in mockery, because there had been no trace of dialect before.” However, Mellors’ inflected response “I was reared here” additionally acts as an assertion of belonging, Connie having inquired of the new gamekeeper “do you like it?” (46–7; ch. 5). Undeniably, both Lawrence and Mellors deliberately use dialect in a confrontational manner, and examples of this basic reflexive facility are plentiful in both narrative and dialogue. Asked by Connie if another key to his hut is available, the gamekeeper responds: “ ‘Not as Ah know on, the’ isna.’ He had lapsed into the vernacular. Connie hesitated. He was putting up opposition.” (90; ch. 8). In addition to the lack of courtesy implicit in the “low” dialect speech that to Connie “seemed not addressed to her, but some common woman” (127; ch. 10), Mellors consciously employs “the fog of the dialect” (95; ch. 8) to simultaneously obscure and highlight his proclamations of identity for the non-northern recipient. However, Lawrence’s parallel “thickening” of the text to reduce its intelligibility for his general readership acts to draw those within the insider community closer to author and northern protagonist. Lydia Blanchard has described the “rapture of dislocation produced by ruptures or violations of intelligibility” experienced when reading the novel’s dialect passages (32), but for the insider reader pleasure is derived from this sense of shared meaning and the poetic quality of accent and idiom authentically conveyed. Editorial glossing of Mellors’ address to his lover strips this joyful resonance from the

dialect phrase, “tha bob-tailed young throstle” (229; ch. 15) becoming the risible and palpably Standard English “you young thrush with short tail-feathers” (364).

Skewing the novel’s title to “Lady Luvverly’s Chatter” to illustrate the interplay of speech and eroticism in the text (and perhaps unwittingly investing it with a poetically northern pronunciation), Michael Bell comments on the “humorous awareness” of language exhibited by both Mellors and Lawrence, and their enjoyment of its playful articulation (209). This extends to moments shared between the lovers in which Mellors expresses his affection and passion for Connie via dialect, and she teasingly mimics his pronunciation (177–8; ch. 12). Essentially, it is via the “throaty, caressive dialect” (222; ch. 15) that Connie finally attains some degree of nearness to her lover, and Mellors expresses his genuine emotion. This semi-humorous, purposefully enunciated performance of dialect provides the interface to the similarly nuanced grim and ordinary within which northern identity finds its fullest expression.

Mellors’ dialect use is prominent in the novel as both the reader and other characters are aware of his ability to converse in Standard English, but motives ascribed to his performance vary across these perspectives. Whilst Clifford Chatterley assumes a pragmatic need to “speak as the ranks speak” (92; ch. 8), his “help” Mrs. Bolton, though northern herself, perceives a more moral lapse: “and talking broad Derbyshire again like the worst, when she, Ivy Bolton, knew he spoke like any gentleman, *really*” (145; ch. 10). Mellors himself exhibits something of the “scholarship boy” mentality, recounting how having discontinued his occupation as a clerk “because I thought I was a weed,” he became a blacksmith and “went back to talking broad” (201; ch. 14). Elements of class and masculinity are apparent in his explanation, and as mentioned, Mellors’ expressions of northernness tend to be flawed by his invectives against class, industrialism, and the

lethargy of modern society, brandishing the “grim” and “ordinary” without their constituent humour. Though the character’s attachment to specific place is imperfect, Lawrence does choose to employ northern dialect as the vehicle for Mellors’ reflexive expression of identity. It is perhaps Connie’s sister Hilda, who though contemptuous of Mellors’ behaviour, provides the key to unearthing his northernness. She recognises that Mellors is “no simple workingman; not he: he was acting! acting!” and challenges this self-conscious usage: “It would be more natural if you spoke to us in normal English, not in vernacular.” Hilda’s outsider perspective is evident in her assumption that dialect is unnatural and abnormal, as well as in her mistaken belief that he is speaking “Yorkshire,” the “default north.” Correcting her, Mellors asserts his right to express his particular northernness: “Did Ah though? An’ canna Ah change if Ah’m a mind to ’t? Nay nay, let me talk Derby if it suits me. If yo’n nowt against it.” When Hilda responds that it sounds “affected,” he counters “Ay, ’appen so! An’ up i’ Tevershall yo’d sound affected.” (243; ch. 16). Hinged on the northern idiom “happen”—glossed and diminished as “perhaps” (363)—Mellors comes close to acknowledging the playful “language game” of northernness, whilst proclaiming its genuine role in his self-definition.

Placing the final pre-“New Wave” northern text that I wish to consider proves challenging, since the work’s publication in 1951 coincides with that of the “Movement” novels. Yet its author is of the generation preceding these writers and their “New Wave” contemporaries. Jack Common, like his fellow Tynesider Sid Chaplin, gained little literary recognition prior to the blossoming of interest in “provincial” and/or working class writing that culminated in the “cultural event” of the British “New Wave,” though both writers fashioned highly realistic and self-reflexive textual norths. *Kiddar’s Luck*, Common’s fictional account of his Newcastle childhood, corresponds more closely to

these later works than to the proto-northern texts discussed so far, and is appropriately considered a precursor of the more popularly successful “Movement” and “New Wave” novels.

Common’s sparing, precise application of dialect in the text situates the characters in specific northern place whilst avoiding the distorting effects of denser renditions. Furthermore, these accented nodes occur both within speech and narrative, thus aligning author, characters, and insider reader within the novel’s northern textual community. Given the retrospective, first person narrative tone this is perhaps unsurprising, but as Michael Pickering and Kevin Robins note in their essay on Common’s fiction, his work tends to be characterised by the “interweaving of a self-conscious literariness with the oral and colloquial tones still flourishing in his native region” (79). Common’s authorial voice is thus at times clearly distinct from those of his characters, but distinctly northern in its relation to them. Reproducing the characteristic north-eastern speech used by his father, the author’s concluding comment is marked by the dialect term describing food taken to work: “At first, mother wanted to get up and make him breakfast, but he wouldn't have that. ‘Had away back to bed, woman, I’ll do for meself.’ She was allowed to put up his bait and that was all” (3). Similarly, Common’s thoughts recurrently coincide with those of his fictional boyhood self: “If [the fog] got worse over the dinner break, mebbe we wouldn’t be able to see our way back to school” (85).

Pickering and Robins also mention the “distinctive irony, humour and self-mockery” evident in Common’s writing, and attribute this to his working class background: “Ironic humour is in fact a distinctive tone of proletarian class- and self-consciousness, expressing moods that range from laconic resignation to buoyant self-confidence and pride” (79). Though they acknowledge the “localised” nature of such

expressions, their analysis, concurred with by Ronald Paul in his own assessment of the novel (88), illustrates the difficulty of extracting the “grim” and “ordinary” aspects of northernness from a demonstrably working class identity. Whilst I have already conceded that northern identity is closely bound to industrial working class imagery and sensibilities, I maintain that dialect performance is indispensable to the functioning of these partially humorous affirmations of identity. Indeed, the surname of the eponymous protagonist Willie Kiddar might conceivably operate as a specifically north-eastern inflected articulation of the word “kidder” as in one who jokes or teases, and the affectionate local term “kidda.” Common’s deflating, “ordinary” humour is apparent in his account of the breaking up of a children’s street fight: “It was exeunt omnes, or ‘all had away by yourselves’ ” (57). The Latin phrase, with its air of the literary and theatrical is transposed into humble, yet self-asserting Geordie, the dialect component providing the critical dynamic.

Though Common provides an amusingly “grim” account of his northern genesis, his attachment to a highly localised and “far” north is evident in the diverse and contending spaces referenced in *Kiddar’s Luck*. Deliberating his prospective Englishnesses, the pre-incarnate Kiddar renders even Yorkshire “soft” and southern in his grim pride for Newcastle’s austere, frigid, but absolute north

What do you think I picked on, me and my genes, that is? Missing lush Sussex, the Surrey soft spots, affluent Mayfair and gold-filled Golder’s Green, fat Norfolk rectories, the Dukeries, and many a solid Yorkshire village, to name only some obvious marks, I came upon the frost-rimed roofs of a working-class suburb in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. (5)

Even his uncle from Sunderland, a mere fifteen miles to the south east, inhabits a lesser north:

I felt he certainly had a compelling argument though couched in curiously uncouth speech. (At that time, I was accustomed to hearing only the pure English spoken in Northumberland and on the Tyne and did not know that as you get deeper into Durham a tykey element creeps into the dialect as a sort of warning to the sensitive traveller that the bottomy dumps of Yorkshire are, indeed, imminent). (49)

Common's northern particularity in combination with his reversal of the objective standard of English pronunciation constitutes a compelling assertion of place-specific identity. In addition, his ever-narrowing insistence of "true" northernness constitutes a comedic performance of identity in its own right. The city itself continues to maintain its distinctiveness through its stubborn ordinariness, unlike less robustly northern places that have succumbed to generic Blackness: "the muck of unrefined capitalism of all periods is pretty thick on all quarters. Still, there is a natural obduracy in the configuration of the place which resists all the erosions and excrescences which otherwise must have made a Hull or a Birmingham out of it" (129).

The main determinant of this highly particularised northernness is of course dialect, the most conspicuous index of belonging to specific place and community. Common highlights the novel's shared linguistic community and its practical utility to the definition and projection of identity. He describes the Saturday night crowd, "none of them better than they should be, because they all spoke the same dialect, and because this was 'canny Newcassel' " taking care to point out that the phrase does not employ the "miserable, debased" Scottish term, but "the true English opposite of 'uncanny'. Anybody that is canny is all right, believe me" (130). This rare glossing of dialect uses indicates the degree to which the idiom is bound to a northernness peculiar to Tyneside, and the author's desire to express and claim the exact shade of its meaning. In the text, "canny" simultaneously collocates with the inflected name of the city and affirms and encapsulates

the northern identity particular to that locale. Indeed, the *Oxford English Dictionary* incorporates the binary into its definition of this northern sense of the word as a “general epithet of approbation or satisfaction, as in ‘Canny Newcastle’ ” (“Canny,” def. 9). “Canny,” it would appear, is Newcastle’s personal proclamation of the “ordinary.”

This survey of a century’s worth of northern-focused novels has identified three elements critical to the effective expression of northernness within the textual community of author, characters, and reader. Firstly, careful realism is required in order to elicit identification with place, community, and characters. Though Blackness serves as a defining characteristic of the modern north, too thick an application to the textual landscape risks engulfing its characters, and risks negating opportunities for “grim” negotiation. Secondly, inhabitants of these spaces must possess agency—and specifically, a northern agency, whereby a character can articulate his relationship to a northern place, through nuanced expressions of the “grim” and the “ordinary.” Effectively rendered dialect constitutes the final and most fundamental element, and its infusion into the text provides the vital dynamic that fuels performances of northernness. Continuing our analysis of northern texts into the 1950s, I shall now examine and assess articulations of northern identity within the so-called “Movement” novels of Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, and John Wain.

Chapter IV

“Queer-fish-from-the-backwoods stuff”: Northernness in the texts of the “Movement”

The imprecise and dubious nature of literary classifications associated with the mid-twentieth century British “cultural event” was indicated in my opening chapter, and in gathering the works of Larkin, Amis, and Wain under the “Movement” appellation, it is not my intent to position them as a cohesive or distinctive body of writing. Like the term “New Wave,” the designation serves to concisely mark a group of texts common in certain aspects of their genesis and reception as well as in my own place-focused analysis. It is worth however, pausing to consider the Movement in relation to the general attributes of the tripartite northern composite, particularly as conceived by other commentators, before submitting its primary texts to a specifically northern close reading.

Naming the “Movement” as such typified the 1950s journalistic construction that situated young, dissenting “scholarship boy” authors and their works within contemporary currents of social change. This externally derived definition notwithstanding, the Movement poets and novelists certainly shared a largely lower middle class and “provincial” background, and having been born in the 1920s, arguably constituted a new literary generation. In addition to Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, and John Wain whose “northern” novels I shall examine in this chapter, poets and literary critics Donald Davie, D.J. Enright, Thom Gunn, and Elizabeth Jennings were also associated with the group. In general terms, the Movement situated itself in opposition to the cultural elitism of the preceding generation of modernist authors, and of the London-

centred literary establishment. Many of the writers, though Oxford and Cambridge educated, taught at the newer civic universities, and critics have distinguished the “New University Wits” from the later “New Wave” writers whose texts and pedigrees demonstrate a greater measure of “ordinariness.” D. J. Taylor, for example, differentiates the Movement’s more humorous and apolitical dissent from that of the “genuinely working class” fiction that came to prominence subsequently (81). Nevertheless, in the context of the “cultural event,” the protagonists of Amis and Wain’s first novels reinforced and were reinforced by notions of the “angry young man,” resulting in the incorporation of both the texts and their authors within this newer media-conceived grouping. Alan Sinfield has noted Movement writers’ tendency to go “self-consciously down-market” (83), expressing distaste for their own middle class culture and the establishment values to which it aspired. For Colin Wilson, branded “angry” by the cultural event himself, the Movement writers’ deliberate use of “tough, unsentimental diction” constituted a superficial and middle class protest against the romanticism of contemporary, established poetry (12). Similarly, in their respective analyses both Sinfield and Harry Ritchie stress the literary rather than class-situated nature of the Movement’s rebellion against an “effete, hypocritical and snobbish” cultural elite (Sinfield, 79) and the “self-indulgence and obscurity” of modernist writing (Ritchie, 92). David Castronovo’s recent attempt to align the novels with a supposed “bloke philosophy” was mentioned earlier, and his emphasis on the assertion of a confrontational, down to earth masculinity provides a further illustration of the ways in which later critics have negotiated the distortions of the cultural event and its sociological excesses.

Reference to place in analyses of the Movement texts has tended to reduce location and identity to a generic “provincial.” This is especially apparent in critical

discourse contemporary with their publication, in which both the novels' authors and characters are typically positioned in opposition to a London-based cultural elite. As Ritchie notes, "provincial" when employed in this context of cultural antagonism is a label "loaded with prejudice but little definite meaning"(13). Though Movement protagonists' characteristic lack of affectation coincides with the basic elements of northern "ordinariness," this provincial non-place does not afford them sufficient belonging to communicate an authentic and localised identity. Situating the Movement as a general reaction against metropolitan sophistication has doubtlessly contributed to the neglect of place-based analyses, and admittedly the texts tend to offer indistinct, incidental portrayals of northernness. However, as I shall describe, articulations of the ordinary and instances of dialect usage constitute prospects for the insider reader, and occasionally for the characters themselves.

Phillip Larkin's early novel *Jill* (1946) describes the experiences of northerner John Kemp during his first year at Oxford, and was written when Larkin himself was an undergraduate at the university. Though the author states in his introduction to the reissued edition that his "hero's background" is "not what the story was about" (vii), Larkin's conspicuous representation of the "lower class provincial" renders the text susceptible to the "scholarship boy" evaluations typical of the following decade. Kemp however, is no iconoclastic "angry young man," and the work's illustration of his disintegrating northernness is of primary interest when reading with reference to place.

Larkin locates the novel's protagonist and his fictional hometown in the particular northern space of Lancashire, and Kemp's intense localisation is apparent on his arrival in Oxford when his well-to-do and urbane roommate Warner asks: " 'Come from Town?' 'From Huddlesford,' said John, not knowing that Town meant London" (7). Though

Kemp's dialect is not rendered in the novel, the author occasionally employs linguistic regionality to indicate the character's distinctness. Experienced via Kemp's insider perspective, Standard English assumes an outlandish aspect analogous to external depictions and receptions of northernness. On meeting Warner's friend Elizabeth, "John stared at her, never having heard before this self-parodying southern coo, and a sense of his alien surroundings came over him" (8–9). Kemp's most pronounced, though involuntary articulation of northernness is also expressed via implied dialect usage, following an explicit demarcation of northern and southern space. Having marked Kemp as "northcountry," Warner's mother humorously confesses her family's "terrific prejudice against northcountry people," remarking that she has "never been farther north than Crewe." The overawed and admiring Kemp, having "angrily" dismissed thoughts of his own mother, declares that he has "never been further south than Crewe." Mrs. Warner asks for his opinion of southerners now that he has "crossed the border," prompting Kemp's instinctive expression of northern identity: "'Well, I don't know' His face grew puzzled, and his voice bore the shadow of pure Lancashire dialect, as he sought about for a true comment" (71–2). Though Kemp is anxious to fit into the southern space of the Warners and their compatriots, this intensification of dialect as he endeavours to express his genuine emotion is significant, if not actively reflexive.

Also evident in the exchange above is Kemp's general rejection of his northern background. Though the down to earth Yorkshireman Whitbread offers genuine friendship in contrast to the patronising, exploitative attentions of Warner and his circle, Kemp studiously avoids his company: "[Whitbread] put a whole potato into his mouth, holding his knife and fork like carpenter's tools, and John began to eat quickly in order to finish before he did and get away from him" (80). Though the element of social aspiration

in Kemp's attitude is obvious, northern attributes such as Whitbread's "flat Yorkshire accent" underlie his rebuffing of a friend that his mother would consider "of his own standing" (31–2). In contrast, Whitbread's inflected dialogue, lightly and authentically rendered by Larkin marks him as a northerner at ease with his regional identity, as does his "ordinary" attitude to the privileged Warner: "Of course, the College takes a number of fellows like him to keep up the tone ... but they look to us to bring home t'bacon" (32). The surrogate life that Kemp constructs around his fabricated sister "Jill" finally eradicates every trace of his innate northernness: "Everything which had contributed to his character had slipped away like an eroding cliff" (165), an erasure mirrored by the physical destruction wrought on his hometown by the wartime air-raid. Following his return to Huddlesford to make contact with his parents, he ruminates on the bombing: "It meant no more to him now, and so it was destroyed: it seemed symbolic, a kind of annulling of his childhood. The thought excited him, It was as if he had been told: all the past is cancelled: all the suffering connected with that town, all your childhood, is wiped out. Now there is a fresh start for you: you are no longer governed by what has gone before." (202). As Nicholas Jenkins observes in his essay on Larkin's "Englishness," the episode parallels the author's own journey to his native Coventry in the wake of the 1940 German Blitz (51), and I would suggest, the lack of belonging to the non-place of his "unspent" childhood apparent in his later poetry: "Nothing, like something, happens anywhere" ("I Remember, I Remember," *Collected Poems*, 68–9).

The lack of resolve that Kemp demonstrates within Oxford's cultured, affluent south casts doubt on the strength of his attachment to northern space, and in general, the novel successfully portrays a failed engagement with northernness. Larkin's diffidently aspirational protagonist consciously ejects all aspects of his earlier life, but his initial

articulations of northern identity are largely faint and unintentional, even in the “natural” space of Huddlesford. However, when Warner questions him about his recent absence, Kemp does appear to demonstrate “ordinary” belonging to the place he had only recently disavowed, possibly in reaction to the ridiculing of the provinces: “ ‘I went to Huddlesford.’ ‘Why?’ ‘I live there, that’s why.’ ‘Do people live there?’ inquired Patrick, with an air of surprise. ‘I thought it was a music-hall fiction’ ” (204).

Larkin’s northern intent in *Fill* is difficult to ascertain, partly as a result of the novel’s status as semi-autobiographical juvenilia, but primarily because of the author’s own ambiguous relation to particular regional space. Whether or not the novel reflects Larkin’s own experiences at Oxford and severance from his Midlands background, he chooses not to position John Kemp as a fully actualised northern character. It is therefore difficult to extract the text from “cultural event” and class-focused readings that would locate Kemp’s tribulations within a framework of social mobility. The mature Larkin’s characteristic tone imparts English space with a “haunted, faded, twisted, melancholy” (Jenkins 60) at variance with the heartier comedy of the northern “grim” and “ordinary,” and as I have indicated, his authorial personality does not appear to incorporate identification with the indefinite northern space of his Coventry childhood, making it difficult to classify him as an “insider” author. Nevertheless, I maintain that place is sufficiently present in *Fill* to necessitate its reading as a description of detachment from northern rather than merely working class identity.

Kingsley Amis’ *Lucky Jim* (1953) is undoubtedly the most widely known of the “Movement” novels, though its categorisation as a text “of the north” presents a number of difficulties. Its “outsider” author grew up in south London, and the narrative centres on an unnamed, “provincial” university town. The eponymous antihero Jim Dixon

however, is identified as northern and specifically Lancastrian upon hearing “an accent northern like his own, but eastern where his own was western” (31). Why then did Amis, who as Ritchie notes had no connection to and little experience of the North (111), elect to portray a specifically northern rather than generically “provincial” or “lower class” character? As mentioned earlier, such commentators see the “Movement” writers’ opposition to the London-based literary establishment as instrumental to their advancement of provincial “ordinariness,” and indeed Ritchie quotes from a personal interview with Amis in which the author states his deliberate “non-southern” casting of Dixon (111). However, insider analysis of the text reveals a performed northernness overlooked by interpretations focused on elements of class, masculinity, and ordinariness.

This latter aspect dominates both the text itself and associated critical discourse, Dixon’s “social hit-and-run buccaneering” (Allsop 47) providing recurrent opportunities for comedy at the expense of a perceived elite. Whether the elect group is conceptualised in terms of social superiority or cultural pomposity, the novel’s base insider community could be regarded as “ordinary” individuals for whom the protagonist’s blows against “uppishness” (49) provide a degree of gratification and identification. However, aligning Dixon’s “ordinary” routines with northern performativity would oversimplify this more subtle and interdependent behaviour, reducing the northern “ordinary” to Castronovo’s “blokishness.” For this reason, Dixon’s more buffoonish exhibitions of ordinary opposition are of less relevance to a place-based reading, lacking dialect or “grim” elements that would indicate expressions of northern identity. *Lucky Jim* is perhaps ordinary-heavy as a text “of the north” but as I shall argue, Dixon is able to articulate his northernness in ways possibly unintended within Amis’ structure of antagonistic ordinariness.

Dixon's strategic handling of the awkward encounter with Christine Callaghan provides an illustration of this authentic, and particularly northern, "ordinary" discourse. Having insulted her in company the previous evening, Dixon exhibits both awareness and articulation of his northern heritage in a dialect-inflected, humble assertion of ordinariness

He quickly decided on a bluff, speak-my-mind approach as the best cloak for rudeness, past or to come. One of his father's friends, a jeweller, had got away with conversing almost entirely in insults for the fifteen years Dixon had known him, merely by using this simple device. Deliberately intensifying his northern accent, Dixon said: 'Afraid I got off on the wrong foot with you last night.' (67)

Amis' signalling of accent is notable, since he indicates the quality of his character's speech solely within the narrative rather than employing orthographical renditions, and this further intensifies Dixon's "deliberate" projection of a northernness consciously held in regionalised memory. The "cloak for rudeness" amounts to a declaration of identity as the plain-speaking northerner that one must take as one finds.

Dixon's other significant northern performance takes place within the novel's comedic climax during his reluctantly delivered "Merrie England" lecture. Whilst his disdain for the subject matter could be seen as northern repudiation of the South's "true England" dogma, the derisive text of *Lucky Jim* seems unsupportive of more speculative attributions of northernness. It is Dixon's more explicit, multi-layered, and conscious engagements with the North, that though infrequent provide valid engagement with the northern insider community. Commencing the lecture, a nervous and intoxicated Dixon unconsciously imitates his senior colleague "to make the stuff sound right." He hears "Welch's intonation clinging tightly round his voice," subjecting his natural accent to the demands of academic authority. Switching for clarity to "a clipped tone, emphasizing all

the consonants and keeping his voice well up at the end of each phrase” Dixon realises with horror that he is now imitating the Principal. His more measured selection of a particular speech form is telling: “This time he chose an exaggerated northern accent as the least likely to give offence or to resemble anybody else’s voice. After the first salvo of laughs from the gallery, things quietened down ... and for a few minutes everything went smoothly” (223–5). At this point, before his presentation degenerates into the truly preposterous he is at his most eloquent, and whilst his inflection is overstated and performed, Dixon’s behaviour recalls the “comforting reversion” to accent observed in previously analysed texts. Furthermore, his expression of northernness suggests a rejection of the stranglehold of Standard English placed on him by the academic and other cultural norms he so despises, and viewed in this context, perhaps the “Merrie England” fallacy itself.

In his recent essay exploring the emergence of the “ordinary” in British literature and philosophy during the 1950s, Colin McGinn has indicated the “clever use of the vernacular” and “stiffened smart demotic” characterising the writing of Amis and his Movement contemporaries (133, 135). This, I feel, is key to distinguishing these *partially northern texts* from the more naturally expressed “New Wave” novels, which tend to be located in northern space with a greater degree of precision. Though the morsels of self-reflexive northernness discernable in *Lucky Jim* are surprisingly rich, as I have attempted to demonstrate, targeting metropolitan culture and its “provincial” simulants by means of a hyper-ordinary northern figure provides limited opportunities for realistic expressions of identity. When isolated from specific place and the galvanising effects of dialect, the “ordinary” is subject to conflation with working class culture, masculinity, or anti-highbrow sentiment, and the Movement novels are in many ways of less northern utility

than earlier regionally situated literature. An exception, I shall argue, is manifest in John Wain's later work, *The Contenders*, published at the time of the "New Wave" but authored by an individual more closely associated with the Movement. I shall address this fully reflexive northern text in the current chapter in order to underline differences in reception from the more celebrated "New Wave" novels, but in many ways regard it as of greater sophistication than certain of these initial "acknowledged northern texts."

Wain's first novel *Hurry on Down* contributed greatly to the "dissentient" temperament advanced by the cultural event, though as Wain himself remarked in his *Declaration* essay "Along the Tightrope," "that notion was derived not from the book, but from the surrounding air" (102). Published in 1953 shortly before Amis' more successful debut, the narrative recounts the protagonist's repudiation of his middle class background and the attendant expectations foisted upon him. Like Amis' hero, Charles Lumley's revolt is not reducible to class antagonism, and as Allsop notes, the novel appears to scorn the idealism of 1930s writers who aspired to be "one with the people" (65). Though Lumley finds some pleasure in his downward escape, he has little desire to integrate with the working class community in which he circulates. Unsurprisingly then, in a novel concentrating on the intentional dislocation of identity and belonging, instances of place-focused articulation are infrequent. However, Stoke-on-Trent born Wain certainly qualifies as an "insider" author, and the novel's incidental references to northern place deserve at least cursory examination in a chapter devoted to Movement texts.

Several demonstrations of the author's awareness of dialect usage are apparent, including the Standard English "veneer" that tenuously overlies the natural Midlands speech of Lumley's peer George Hutchins. Wain doubtlessly employs this as a further indicator of the middle class hypocrisy despised by his protagonist, but appears to situate

dialect as a more authentic, honest aspect of identity, as demonstrated by Hutchin's parents whose "Birmingham speech exposed in a instant the unreality of his own diction" (14). Emotional reversion reveals Hutchins's abandoned northernness when confronted by his new chauffeur, Lumley: "Hutchins was startled out of his new urbanity. The old Black Country expression and manner came back with a rush" (205). The author also observes the interplay of dialect with the "ordinary's" humble-pride aspect via the character of Ern Ollershaw, a Lancastrian whose dialect Wain renders in a readable, natural style that fosters engagement with the insider readership. Lumley's encounter with the northerner inspires him with an appreciation of the process and capability of the place-located ordinary: "A Lancashire accent, to him, was something associated with music-hall humour. And yet it was always some special kind of humour, he suddenly realized; always the flat, puncturing kind that relished an attack on the pretentious or the far-fetched. The humour of practical men. And of Philistines" (60–1).

Wain's inaugural novel is not aligned to specific northern place nor is its comedic, truculent wielding of an unfocused "ordinary" intended to communicate the particularities of northernness, and these occurrences of dialect are largely supplementary to the narrative. In contrast, the author's 1958 publication *The Contenders* satisfies both of these requisites, primarily as a result of the agency conferred on its northern narrator-protagonist Joe Shaw. In the novel's opening pages, Shaw—and Wain—situates his hometown in particular northern space, defying the metropolis' conglomeratic perspective, and establishes belonging to this space by means of a prolonged, highly reflexive "grim" performance. Commencing with an affirmation of identity against belittling southern exclusivity, the character lays claim to the defined non-space enclosing the North: "for the bourgeoisie there's the fatal dividing-line; if you're in the London

telephone book, you're in town, and if not, you live 'in the provinces.' Well, we were in the provinces, and no error" (5). Superficially, the town's Blackness appears to promote the "escaper" mentality associated with cultural event interpretations: "The mere fact of being brought up in a town where everything was shabby, dirty, dwarfish, peeling and generally lousy was another thing that helped to make most of us competitive" (5), but for the insider reader, attachment is afforded to this bleak aspect via grimly-proud "toughness." As will be recalled, this negotiation of harsh, ugly space via the "grim" attributes qualities of resilience and determination to northerners articulating such belonging. The novel's overarching theme emphasises this duality of motivation in the rivalry between the London-based escapee Robert Lamb and the no less ambitious but firmly localised Ned Roper.

The narrator's positioning and pronouncement of his hometown is particularly noteworthy, incorporating both "grim" actualisation of northern place and meta-discourse within the insider community of author, reader, and character. Local journalist Shaw, interacting with Wain, his fellow northern writer, notes that he cannot name the town due to the "fool convention in English publishing" and refuses to "follow the idiotic custom of calling it Bruddersfield or Grimchester" (5). The former name cannot but recall the obscured Bradford of Priestley's *The Good Companions*, whilst the latter would effortlessly provide the location for any Victorian industrial narrative, and both Shaw and Wain seem to share a wry smile with the northern reader, in lamenting the literary effacement and distortion of a particular northern place. Definition of the town aligns it unmistakably with Wain's own Potteries birthplace as does successive narrative describing the local industry, and this declaration of place in spite of the literary establishment is achieved via a "grim" claim of belonging to specifically Midlands space: "that place you

stop at on the way to Manchester—the one where you look out of the train window when it’s slowing down, and think, ‘Well, at least I don’t live *here*.’ ” (5). Harry Ritchie reads this “disparagement” of place as further evidence supporting the mislabeling of Wain and his contemporaries as “provincial” writers (84), but in my opinion, this demonstrates the utility of a northern-based close reading of the text.

Place bestows a distinctive Midlands northernness on Joe Shaw’s fellow townspeople, and he self-reflectively details the belonging communicated by their grimly comedic and implicitly dialect-permeated communication

These people, in the town I mustn’t name, aren’t dour like Northerners; on the other hand they aren’t shut up inside themselves like the southern English; they’re volatile, friendly and sardonic. The more they like each other the faster the sharp little epigrams fly through the air, like a non-stop conversational darts match. (47)

Again, an insider reading highlights the deficiencies of interpretations overlooking the northernness of such texts, in this case Kenneth Allsop’s contemporary review of the novel in which he complains “I was struck, almost fascinated, by the unvarying hostility with which everyone behaves. No one in Wain’s world ever *says* anything to anyone else: they shout or jeer” (63).

In addition to the grim-articulated establishment of northern locality and attachment, Wain also accomplishes intensely self-conscious expression of dialect and the “ordinary” by means of his insider narrator. When Lamb’s sophisticated and glamorous wife mentions his hometown, Shaw perceives but fails to honour her request for the exaggerated northern performance that he might in other circumstances have employed defensively: “ ‘It seems such a strange place, from what Robert’s told me. But he won’t take me.’ She shot me a brief glance that told me it was my cue to come in on the act, to play up the queer-fish-from-the-backwoods stuff” (147). Instead, he responds with a

northern reflex incorporating the “proud-toughness” of the grim ordinary; “ ‘You’re better off in civilization,’ I said, swivelling my gaze back to Myra. I spoke without thinking, but—it interested me to notice—she coloured slightly; as if feeling a rebuff in my words” (148). Wain renders dialect primarily via characteristic phrasing that resonates authentically with the insider reader, such as the pottery worker Baxter’s “ordinary” admonition of his artistic colleague Lamb: “It’s honest bloody work as we want here, not fooling about with a bloody cloth over your eyes and calling it creative mood!” (31). Furthermore, in transcribing Baxter’s preceding utterance Shaw explicitly rejects the established linguistic conventions of the “regional” novel:

‘Don’t you think you ought to be getting on with some work instead of just wasting the firm’s time?’ Actually, he pronounced it more like ‘fearn’ and ‘weark.’ I can’t be bothered to work out phonetic equivalents for these things. But imagine a self-righteous, though quite polite, voice, with the flat, nasal accent of North Staffordshire. (30)

The meta-consciousness of northern author Wain writing a northern author Shaw writing a northern speaker is remarkable, especially in the context of the textual insider community unhindered by both authors’ literal refusal to spell out meaning for an external readership. A comparable engagement with dialect is evident in Shaw’s mischievous glossing of his own stock phrase usage, which purposefully elicits an identical phrase in response from the northern reader: “ ‘Get off,’ I said. I should explain that ‘Get off’ is an expression much used in North Staffordshire as an ironic rejoinder to obvious remarks” (29). The narrator’s own situation with respect to northernness also finds expression in his scripting of dialect. For example, his awareness of and impatience at the instinctive use of northern stock phrases by the older generation is clear in the truncation applied to the “Things Are Bad aria” (33) delivered by Lamb’s grandfather: “ ‘And the only way I’ve been able to pull through even as well as I ’ave’—he only dropped his

itches when speaking with unusual emphasis—‘is by taking care to let a bit of brass stick to my fingers. And my advice to any young man,’ etc. etc.” (35). In addition, Shaw indicates the “emotional” intensification of dialect characteristic of this more organic “reflex” northernness.

To conclude, I shall unpack instances of performed identity by the text’s triumvirate of oppositional figures, beginning with the staunchly northern manufacturer Ned Roper. As the narrative reaches its close, Roper having “won” Lamb’s showy wife Myra, uses the wedding speech to declare his northern legitimacy. Recounted by Shaw and “[s]horn of its festooning bullshit” (247), his self-reflexive expression of identity is reduced to a grotesque of the “ordinary.” Roper validates his bride’s recurrent choice of a husband “from among us” proclaiming, in Shaw’s words:

Because we knew how to breed ’em good. Where would old England be without us? Rough diamonds, we might be, but by God, we were the boys. We were resourceful, imaginative, tough, reliable. We were early to bed and early to rise, healthy wealthy and wise. He even brought in stuff about the clay: semi-poetic stuff about the clay from which we grew, as if we were all a lot of rambler roses. (247–8)

The intersection of reflexive acts is intriguing in this dynamic— would Roper’s performance experienced directly exhibit the semi-humorous, authentic tone of the “ordinary,” or should the insider reader trust the narrator’s charge of cynical manipulation? Shaw explicitly states that he “suddenly realised what Ned was doing,” and though the enactment incorporates belonging to place, Shaw’s interpretation strips out the shared essence of the reflexive performance leaving mere parochial rhetoric: “It was to claim the status of the non-prodigious son. He had stayed in the district and Robert hadn’t” (248).

Shaw's own attachment to northern place is more complex, though he also maintains a performed northernness in order to demonstrate belonging: "I had fitted myself out with an exterior that proclaimed a set of loyalties at first sight and sound; anybody meeting me would put me down immediately as a man who accepted the values of midland provincial life—honest, sturdy, a bit rough round the edges, making a style out of the refusal to *have* any style" The character's visual and auditory presentation of northernness communicates the humble-pride of the "ordinary," though as is evident throughout his narrative, this is delivered with humorous self-awareness: "I was a dab hand at the 'Now-lad-you-must-take-us-as-you-find-us' stuff" (143). Shaw thus continuously affirms his attachment to northern place via an articulation of identity that is entirely sincere yet acknowledges and negotiates the town's unrefined Blackness. Positioned in the novel as an intermediary between the polar attitudes of his friends Roper and Lamb, Wain's narrator is similarly pulled between north and south, needing the "thick, warm stew of provincial cosiness" yet aware that he "should have gone mad if my bluff had been called and I'd been asked to settle into that position for good" (143). His frequent visits to London alleviate this dread of performed northernness solidifying into unconscious belonging to place, yet he has no wish to emulate Lamb's escape and forfeit his northern identity: "I had never, even for a second, seen myself as Londoner. Compared with the inhabitants of the town I mustn't name, they seemed like robots" (144). The privileged position of narrative voice obviously allows Shaw's expression to exhibit a high degree of self-reflection, but arguably, his identity most closely resembles the characteristic Midlands northernness that Wain advances.

The return of celebrated local artist Robert Lamb to his Potteries hometown provides a further profoundly reflexive episode in the narrative. Devastated when his wife

leaves him for Roper, he implores Shaw to take him “home”—instinctively for both of them this means leaving London for the “scenes of his boyhood, among the people he had grown up with” (173). Lamb’s reconnection with his northern identity is almost osmotic as he ceaselessly walks the northern streets, and Shaw realises that he is indeed “taking on a special kind of fuel. So much of his inner strength came from this purely local source, and could not be derived from anything or anywhere else.” Dialect provides another vital source of sustenance for the returned escaper, as he “consumes” lost northernness: “He’d strike up conversations with people just to hear them say something in the local accent, which for the moment so fascinated him that even to be insulted in it gave him the sensation of listening to a heavenly choir” (180). Observing his friend’s instinctual realignment with place, the narrator situates this authentic construction of identity in counterpoint to the efforts of Parsons, a “young fool of a reporter,” to position Lamb against a “Lowryscaped” north. By means of the “grim,” Shaw infers that Parsons appears intent on capturing a self-consciously northern photograph of the local celebrity “standing in the lee of a slag-heap” or “framed in the rotting wood of a slum doorway, looking with angry pity at the smoke-dyed bricks,” but notes that Lamb fails to “get into some striking setting and assume the real right pose” (181). Of course, the “real right pose” for Lamb is his genuine reaffirmation of northernness stimulated by place in its communal rather than purely scenic aspect, and indeed it is amongst the “nonentities who would have cluttered up the picture” that Parsons always finds him (182). Wain and his character’s awareness of Blackness articulated without the mediation of the “grim” is particularly significant in the context of the text’s reception, and Parson’s attempt to frame the artist within a Black landscape seems mirrored in the novel’s dust jacket copy, which makes reference to the “blackened air and white clay of the English pottery towns,”

and the “drabness” and “sour soil” of the “industrial English midlands.” Lamb’s realignment to the North frees him from the “overcleverness” characterising his London paintings, and he produces his most honest and successful work depicting his hometown’s “dark, narrow streets” and “factories dotted about at random among the houses,” thereby reclaiming the very Lowryscaped elements that he was to be fixed against (184).

The Contenders then, profoundly expresses northern identity in the self-aware aspect that as I have proposed, attained textual prominence in the novels of the “New Wave.” However as noted, the earlier “Movement” texts were especially vulnerable to sociologically-focused journalistic readings that encoded their protagonists as “angry young men” and amalgamated these less explicitly northern narratives with those of the “New Wave” on the basis of this apparent commonality. Whilst the Oxford-educated “Movement” authors are neither personally nor textually bound to northern space to a significant degree, I have repeatedly categorised their works as “semi-“ or “proto-northern” both in reference to incidences of northern reflexivity and propagation of the “New Wave” itself. As Peter Hitchcock has noted, the Movement novels did much to open the door for working class writers, as the literary establishment attempted to “capitalize on the Angries” (35).

The “hyper-ordinary” protagonists of Amis and Wain’s inaugural works fail to express this trait in the place-bound and “authentic” manner demonstrative of northern identity, but their refusal to perform “for” a metropolitan, middle class readership contributes greatly to the realisation of genuinely northern texts. The Movement novels present an “ordinary,” non-exotic north, reject literary conventions that distort dialect expression, and periodically communicate a northernness of value to an insider readership. Both writers subsequently produced more highly nuanced and “northern”

works that built upon this “ordinary” foundation, and I briefly mention Amis’ *Take a Girl Like You* (1960) in my discussion of post-“New Wave” texts. As I have argued, though, it was Staffordshire-born Wain who with *The Contenders*, most successfully articulated northern identity outside the core of “New Wave” writers. His 1957 *Declaration* essay demonstrates this awareness of the particularity of place: “An artist can only have one principle: to treat whatever seems to him to present itself insistently for treatment, in the bit of life lived by him, in the corner of history and geography he inhabits” (101).

Chapter V

“Just about thraiped wi’ Stradhoughton”: Reflexive northernness and the “New Wave”

As noted in my introduction, for convenience I have identified the novels of my five key authors with the “New Wave,” though this description is derived from the cinematic movement that included films based on their major texts. This “northern realist” tradition emerged from the documentary productions of directors such as Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson, and John Schlesinger that focused on subjects neglected by mainstream British cinema, notably the everyday lives of ordinary (often working class) people. By means of this inference from the subsequent cycle of “British New Wave” films, I am effectively extracting northern-aligned texts and authors from the journalistic assemblage of “angry young men;” a spurious grouping that placed Kingsley Amis, John Wain, and the playwright John Osborne alongside John Braine and Alan Sillitoe largely on the basis of their supposedly rebellious protagonists. Whilst I maintain that there is a degree of continuity with respect to northern place between the “Movement” and “New Wave” novels, distinguishing between the two literary phases is important, as I shall describe below. Consequently, the “New Wave” authors whose works will be the primary focus of my study include John Braine (born 1922), Alan Sillitoe (1928), Keith Waterhouse (1929), David Storey (1933), and Stan Barstow (1928). With the exception of Alan Sillitoe born in the East Midlands city of Nottingham, all of the writers originate from West Yorkshire, which should be taken into account when discussing “northern” identity. I shall also examine the writers’ later post “New Wave” works, the

classification serving to identify those writers associated with the “northern writing phenomenon” of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

We have already noted later distinctions between the “Movement” and “New Wave” texts that at the novels’ time of publication were obscured by the journalistic moment’s “angry” focus, but the dimensions of class, place, and sociocultural change pertinent to such evaluations require careful balancing. If contemporary assessments were overly coloured by an urgent need to rebel against traditional lifestyles and identities, subsequent class-based readings also face incongruities across the novels of the so-called “New Wave.” As I have contended throughout this thesis, place and belonging play a fundamental role in textual expression, and the hitherto neglected northern aspect of these works must be asserted in a manner that preserves the subtleties and contradictions of identity and acknowledges the interrelatedness of factors such as class, contemporary social currents, and the literary and cinematic phenomenon of the “New Wave” itself. Stuart Laing’s positioning of *Room at the Top* as the “crucial linking text” between the educated “Movement” characters and the “working class protagonists of Sillitoe and Storey” (62) is valuable in this respect, but problematises the white-collar characters that are the subject of *Billy Liar* and *A Kind of Loving*. Nevertheless, the ordinary aspect of “proletarian” categorisations is of significant utility in highlighting the realism characterising the “New Wave” novels in their literary manifestation of everyday actuality as experienced in specific place, of and for the northern community. The conjunction of the “ordinary” and dialect usage is crucial to this authentic inscription of northernness, Norman Page noting the “serious” use of inflected speech and colloquialisms by authors such as Barstow, Sillitoe, and Storey (73) that affords a distinctive reading experience for the insider audience (53).

Similarly, though sociological “angry” interpretations overextend the texts’ oppositional elements, identifying a juncture of disruptive social phenomena supports this grouping of literary works and helps to explain their particularly intense expressions of northern identity. Chronologically in our analysis of textual northernness, publication of the “New Wave” novels occurred during a period undeniably marked by profound social change, and though I would argue that this did not determine their complexion in the manner “angry” readings supposed, such ruptures inevitably questioned (northern) identities and provoked their active expression. The journalistic promotion of “angry” writers also played a major role in the elevation of the North in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the “New Wave” of northern-located authors and novels displacing the preceding “provincial,” as Stephen Wade notes in his discussion of regional writing. Though this relocation may have constituted a mere “twist of semantic application” (130), the novels’ heightened realism and specificity of place facilitated insider interaction with authentically northern texts, and demonstrated concrete regional identity to the general readership. As “New Wave” author Stan Barstow relates in his autobiographical account of the period, “British publishing had for far too long remained locked inside its metropolitan fastness, living still on the prewar notion that its book-buyers and readers were largely confined to a Home Counties middle class that was interested in almost anything before stories of working-class life in the provinces” (85). For the brief duration of the “New Wave,” this “northern writing phenomenon” challenged that presumption (129).

I have advanced place-based identity as the crucial element missing from readings of texts categorised as “of the North,” but it is worth pausing to reiterate the meanings that this concept is intended to convey. The literary promotion of writers’ northernness was particularly pronounced within the “New Wave,” and it is vital to distinguish less

nuanced declarations of belonging from the gradations of “organic” to “reflexive” northern identity that I have described thus far. As will be recalled, the northernness that I have proposed is complex, multifaceted, and in its self-reflexive aspect, simultaneously authentic and performed. Whilst inextricably bound to specific place, identity is not reducible to local pride or parochial jingoism, though the diversity of northern place is recognised as crucial. Its distinctly northern characteristics derive in part from the bleakness of the industrial landscapes that typify “Black England,” differentiation from a culturally dominant southern metropolis, and most importantly, the highly distinctive, representational inflections and vocabulary of dialect. In stating this, I wish to emphasise the intricate nature of any expression of identity and avoid branding these novels, their authors, and characters as “northern” in any undifferentiated or all-encompassing sense. In fact, the very nub of my argument is that the novels of the “New Wave” authors interrogate northernness *with* northernness, and it is the working out of disparate and often conflicting identities at this time of social upheaval within a specific and realistic northern space that contributes to their importance and utility. In subjecting these texts to the “insider” close reading that I have employed thus far, I hope to demonstrate the profoundly self-conscious northernness that they exhibit, whilst navigating the problematic “Lowryscape” accusation advanced by Phillip Dodd and Dave Russell’s contention that the “New Wave” novels actually undermined the North. I shall focus in the current chapter on the five novelists’ celebrated early novels, all of which had corresponding cinematic releases within the “British New Wave,” before examining their richly northern, but less well known later works.

As mentioned above, Stuart Laing identifies John Braine’s *Room at the Top*, the inaugural “New Wave” novel in terms of publication, as a more realistic and serious piece

of writing in contrast to the earlier “Movement” texts, and crucially notes its setting in the “industrial north” (62). Indeed, the novel’s opening line immediately situates the narrative in a grim-tinged northern landscape: “I came to Warley on a wet September morning with the sky the grey of Guiseley sandstone” (7). However, Braine presents a complex, differentiated region that skews grim and ordinary axes away from their conventional south-referencing alignment and contains them within a space of competing norths. Ambitious Joe Lampton “escapes” his bleak Dufton home to the prosperous manufacturing town of Warley, a trans-northern migration that complicates “grim” and “ordinary” attributes of his northern identity. Describing Dufton to his well-to-do landlady, Lampton articulates an ordinary-grim that appears partially severed from the humble pride associated with belonging, underscored by his use of the impersonal pronoun: “A lot of mills. And a chemical factory. And a Grammar School and a war memorial and a river that runs different colours each day. And a cinema and fourteen pubs. That’s really all one can say about it” (16). Wade has remarked upon the humour evident in Braine’s “duff” branding of a town presented as a “stereotype of northern industrial decline” (133), but a degree of northern insider referentiality is also conceivable, Braine deriding the conventional literary norths of “Coketown” and the like in a manner similar to John Wain in *The Contenders*. Within the narrative itself, Lampton also demonstrates this awareness of externally ascribed northernness on surveying Warley’s most prestigious district: “I saw it against the background of Dufton, the back-to-back houses, the outside privies, the smoke which caught the throat and dirtied clean linen in a couple of hours, the sense of being always involved in a charade upon Hard Times” (24).

Lampton’s perception of his fellow Duftonians further emphasises his consciousness of and removal from this localised northern instance, and questions the

veracity of the “organic” or “reflex” northernness that arguably constitutes the most basic element of regional identity. In Dufton, “everyone behaved as if they were under contract to live up to the tradition of the outspoken Yorkshireman with a heart of gold underneath,” though “underneath the rough exterior their hearts were as base and vicious as anyone’s from the Suave and Treacherous South” (18). The contours of northern reflexivity are difficult to trace in Lampton’s denunciation—though he and his childhood friend Charles Lufford regard the rest of the Dufton populace as “zombies,” the imputed superficial “contractual” northernness in which “[b]luntness was the fashion” suggests deliberate performance, though this is perhaps akin to Dodd’s passively assumed “Lowyscape” north. Braine’s capitalisation of the text denoting southern identity appears to mark it as a stock phrase or northern truism, and aligning this within the Dufton community presents further complexity. Relayed by Lampton, the text expresses the unmeasured, impulsive, insincere demonstration of northern identity that he despises, whilst resonating with genuine southern-focused oppositional aspects of northernness. Focused on the North at a vital point of change, many of the “New Wave” texts challenge identifications of reflex northernness with an essential or “true north” in this manner.

Room at the Top is highly susceptible to both “angry” and “working class” interpretations in its depiction of an individual striving for wealth, prestige, and escape from the limitations imposed by his locality, and this is indeed the novel’s general motif. Place, as I have indicated, is fundamental to the narrative, and Lampton’s negotiation of these social hierarchies is frequently marked by performances of northern dialect. The significant element of regionally-based identity, overlooked and flattened into an attribute of class in readings inattentive to place is also crucial to an understanding of the difficulties Lampton encounters as he attempts to resituate his northernness in terms of

belonging, and both of these aspects will provide the focus for my analysis of the text. On arriving in Warley, Lampton demonstrates that his aspirations extend to the linguistic though he is not yet sufficiently confident to abandon the vowel sounds that act as markers of northernness: “I was going to pronounce Aunt with a broad a but decided not to attempt it yet” (16). The narrator’s self-awareness of these characteristic inflections is beautifully communicated to the insider reader as he describes his well-spoken landlady as having “no hint either of the over-buxom vowels of Yorkshire or the plum-in-the-mouth of the Home Counties” (9). Key to a northern-centred reading of the novel is an examination of the periodic deviations in Lampton’s progress within this hierarchy of speech, particularly “lapses” into dialect and back towards his authentic native north of Dufton—zombies notwithstanding. A deliberate and defensive articulation of northern voice is evident in Lampton’s initial encounter with his moneyed rival Jack Wales. Having excused himself from an invitation to drinks “like Royalty explaining graciously that it was impossible,” Wales is confronted by the narrator’s “ordinary” northernness: “‘Tha doesn’t have to coax me to sup some ale, lass’ I said to Eva, deliberately dropping into broad Yorkshire to counter-attack Wales’ genuine officer’s accent, as carelessly correct as his tweed suit. ‘Coom on’ ” (41). Occasionally, such intensifications of accent are less deliberate, such as Lampton’s angry dismissal of the agreement to set him up in business if he leaves Warley and Brown’s daughter Susan: “To my horror, I found my accent growing broader. ‘Ah reckon nowt to your bloody rotten offer. Ah’ll dig ditches afore Ah’ll be bought’ ” (202). Lampton is sensitive to measured dialect usage amongst the Warley northerners, such as the “overdone” Yorkshire accent sported by the wealthy industrialist Brown as an “ordinary” affirmation of his identity despite his social status (161). In addition, he is irritated by flashy George Aisgill’s inauthentic claiming of the

northern phrase “where there’s muck, there’s brass” to grimly disparage the council’s smoke abatement policy, and almost counters that “he took damned good care to live outside the muck” (64). Aisgill’s lack of belonging and entitlement to northern space is conveyed by Lampton’s southern-cast description of his ostentatious house: “expensive, built-to-order, but out of place, like a Piccadilly tart walking the moors in high heels and nylons” (67).

We have noted similar emotional and confrontational intensifications of northernness in preceding texts, typically when regional identity encounters challenges to belonging, along gradients of social status or geographical location. However, the “New Wave” texts are conspicuous in their consciousness of northern articulation, as is evident from the commentary that Braine affords his protagonist in *Room at the Top*. Furthermore, I would argue that the engagement of these authors and characters with northern identity exhibits a complexity that exceeds considerations of class and other sociological dimensions, notably in the self-conscious and often playful exercise of dialect. Humour has been positioned as a factor central to more reflexive expressions of northernness, and verbal performances of this type richly illustrate the comedic yet entirely genuine manifestation of place-based identity evident in both the pleasure of the speech form itself and the nuanced communication afforded within the insider community. For Joe Lampton, a problematic and deracinated northerner, such language play provides both respite from his struggle to the top and temporary resolution of his fractured belonging. On holiday with his lover Alice Aisgill in “Tess of the D’Urbervilles country,” the couple engage in a linguistic game in which Alice adopts an appropriate West Country accent in order to flirt with Lampton: “Oh, you *are* a one, Mr L, reely there’s no ’olding you once your passions are aflame. Don’t never leave a gal alone for one minute, you don’t.”

Lampton however, intensifies his natural accent, apparently taking pleasure in his northern-masculine conquest of Aisgill's wife: " 'Aye, lass,' I said, 'T'ruth is, Ah'm *insattible*. Tha's let thisen in for a rough time, Ah'm telling tha straight' " (176). Indeed, much like Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lampton finds dialect to be the most effective vehicle for the authentic expression of his emotions, and notes his modulation of the humor attending his northern articulation: "When I say that she suited me I use the word in the Yorkshire sense too, meaning pleased with, delighted about: *Ah'm right suited wi' thee, lass*, was a statement I made entirely without facetiousness; it expressed something I couldn't say in any other language" (183). Braine additionally italicises the dialect phrase, accentuating the alternate meaning indicated by Lampton; a technique that subverts the distorted "otherness" introduced orthographically by outsider writers. The passage also marks a moment of successfully negotiated northern attachment for Lampton, whose earlier more mercenary use of dialect to charm Susan Brown had "devalued" his northernness (77).

The connection between dialect use and the ruptures of belonging in *Room at the Top* is perhaps best illustrated in Lampton's return to Dufton at the midpoint of the novel. The escapee narrator expresses the guilt he feels when thinking of the family that he has left behind, "half hating myself" for "seeing them as foreigners" and "not my sort of person any longer" (85), and via Braine offsets this "otherness" textually, rendering his aunt and uncle's speech in a dialect significantly more marked than that of Lampton's contemporaries in Warley. Though this could be attributed to the typical reduction of accent associated with education or generational difference, Lampton's interaction with his aunt is highly informative. Mediated via the iconic northern motif of strong tea, his reactions and articulations of dialect reveal complex and contradictory attachments to

northern place and identity. The homely ritual of brewing tea inspires Lampton to assert his continued belonging to the “ordinary” north of Dufton in spite of the potential denorthing influence of the progressive and less Black Warley: “Moved by an impulse of affection, I kissed her on the cheek. ‘Make it so t’spoon’ll stand up in it, love,’ I said. ‘And I want a pint-pot’ ” (89). The narrator’s intensified and self-transcribed dialect matches the rendering applied to his relatives’ speech in the text, paralleling his request for an “ordinary” pint mug which redresses his earlier admiration for the expensive coffee service used by his Warley landlady. The tea acts as a marker of authentic northernness and belonging for Lampton: “t’first right cup of tea Ah’ve had sin’ Ah left home” (90), and reconnects him with the comfortingly straightforward north of Dufton. His enjoyment of this natural, reflex northernness is short-lived however, as his aunt questions his attempt to attach himself to Warley and the privileged Susan Brown: “What good’s a girl like that to you? Get one of your own class, lad; go to your own people” (90). Lampton’s conflicted northernness is once again conveyed via the emblematic tea, this time evoking the stultifying atmosphere of the insular, tradition-bound Dufton from which he escaped: “I didn’t like its taste any longer; it was too strong, stuffy and pungent like old sacking” (90). Ian Haywood has commented on this tension between nostalgia for community life and the lure of social advancement, identifying the episode as a moment pivotal to Lampton’s consciousness of identity and noting the significance of his distaste for his aunt’s tea (99). But Haywood frames this identity in terms of class, which as I have maintained neglects the particularities of the northern “ordinary,” and Lampton’s reassertion of northernness via dialect.

The status of *Room at the Top* as the first of a “New Wave” of novels is perhaps then justified by its realistic presentation of a complex, diverse northern region at a moment of

change that brought expressions of place-specific identity into sharp relief. In common with its “Movement” sibling *The Contenders* published in the following year, a distinctly northern voice directs the narrative, commenting on its own expressions of northernness as the protagonist negotiates the incongruities of a regional identity rendered increasingly fluid. The novels’ self-consciously northern narrators tend to be situated at loci of tension within the insider community, and their turning back of northernness upon itself to interrogate areas of fracture and transformation affords abundant interaction amongst regionally integrated readers, authors, and characters. Though Joe Lampton ultimately fails to preserve an authentic northern identity, his journey between the divergent norths of Dufton and Warley reveals much about the negotiation of such an identity in separation from its supposedly natural state.

Nottingham author Alan Sillitoe’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is exemplary in its communication of northernness within such a regional communality, and I shall concentrate primarily on the language processes within this seemingly non-reflective text. Arthur Seaton, the novel’s central character, offers little commentary on his own or others’ northern identity, and Sillitoe, whose narrative voice intermingles freely with that of his protagonist, converses in a similarly straightforward manner. At first reading then, the novel appears comparable to texts such as Greenwood’s *Love on the Dole* presenting a highly realistic but self-contained “organic” northernness eclipsed by the more dynamic and confrontational aspect of class. Contemporary evaluations of Sillitoe’s work certainly drew heavily on perceptions of Seaton as representative of a newly affluent, rebellious generation, and later analyses by writers such as Ian Haywood though more nuanced have also tended to emphasise tensions accompanying the decline of traditional working class lifestyles. Though Sillitoe’s explicit articulations of northernness are rare, his

expressive and intensely localised prose arguably provides an extremely effective vehicle for the diffusion of such sentiments within the region's textual "insider community." Peter Hitchcock's work has been invaluable in conceptualising this process, and his description of "an acknowledged community of interest" between author and reader (54) has informed much of my thinking on the specifically northern dimensions of the "New Wave" novels. I shall continue to draw on Hitchcock's exceptional "language-based exegesis of Sillitoe's writing" (2) whilst maintaining that interaction with this language must incorporate its northern and not just "working class" particularities.

As already mentioned, the narrative of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is characterised by "ordinary" interaction between voices within the text's insider community. Natural switches in perspective between the "I" marking Seaton's thoughts and observations, the author's third person descriptions, and direct addresses to the "you" of the reader and wider northern community constitute what Hitchcock describes as a "dialogic sideward glance at the reader" (54), "inviting identification with the discourse" (69). Key to this process is the text's omnipresent but naturalistic colloquial tone that erases conventional literary separations between character, author, and reader (70), and critically in my opinion, localises the text around the North Midland northernness of those participants. In Hitchcock's analysis, the novel's oppositional literary style constitutes a distinctively working class discourse, and correspondences between this authorial defiance and the attitude of his protagonist are evident in the refusal to be defined—and written—by outsiders. Whilst Seaton's anarchic "us and them" proclamations could be interpreted as class antagonism, they appear equally applicable to external characterisations of the North: "I'm me and nobody else; and whatever people think I am or say I am, that's what I'm not, because they don't know a bloody thing

about me” (120). Nigel Gray has objected to the fact that Sillitoe “appears to be present in the novel like an unannounced guest” (131), but it is this continuity between northern author and the real world and textual regional communities to which he belongs that, I feel, imparts the novel with a rarefied reflexivity that is profound yet barely articulated. Sillitoe’s “poetic” use of dialect within a highly realistic and concretely local northern textual community provides the communicative medium within which identity is diffused and assimilated, and this aesthetic dimension of northern reflexivity is closely related to the pleasurable language play that was noted in *Room at the Top*.

Interactions afforded by the shared community of language within Sillitoe’s novel are clearly demonstrated, as Seaton pictures his mother purchasing brandy to treat his upset stomach. The character hears the stock phrases and dialect intonations that “would” be used, these having additionally been recognised by the author and in turn the insider reader. Sillitoe also frames the episode by reaffirming Seaton’s precise consciousness of these linguistic rhythms

‘Sixpennyworth of Indian brandy, Mr Taylor,’ she would say, entering the shop. Old Tightfist, thought Arthur. ‘Nice thing to come for on a morning like this,’ the shopkeeper would say, measuring it out in drops. ... ‘Do you think this’ll do him much good?’ she would ask. ‘The poor bogger woks too ’ard if you ask me. He’s a good lad, though. Allus ’as bin. Don’t know what I’d do wi’out ’im.’ That’s what Arthur knew she would say. (38–9)

As noted, dialect is key to the localisation of the narrative for the northern insider community, and the particularity of such language is evident in the British Board of Film Censors’ interpretation of Sillitoe’s subsequent screenplay. In their survey of mid-century British cinema, Jeffrey Richards and Anthony Aldgate quote from the Board’s letter to the production company for *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, which stated: “Furthermore, we simply cannot accept the word ‘bogger.’ We have not yet accepted the use of the word

‘bugger’ in films and the substitution of the letter ‘o’ for the letter ‘u’ makes no significant difference” (135). Sillitoe’s textual rendering of a dialect inflection central to his character’s identity and representative of the narrative’s location was thus interpreted as mere euphemistic evasiveness. For the North, the ‘o’ made an extremely significant difference.

The aesthetic quality of Sillitoe’s textual expressions of dialect provides powerful attachment to place through the recognition of phrase and intonation combined with enjoyment of their resonance and form. Seaton’s tirade against the “snot-gobbling get that teks my income tax” (114) might be read by Hitchcock as a class-centred interaction between author and reader, but its specifically northern articulation augments and perhaps transcends this oppositional duality. Sillitoe’s later writing exhibits a more refined and reflective “northern poetics” that will be discussed in the succeeding chapter, but attention must also be drawn to the author’s highly specific situating of his narrative. Whilst the “New Wave” novels tend to be located in very realistic northern spaces that fit effortlessly into the geography of a textual North, Sillitoe is singular in his incorporation of actual Nottingham streets and landmarks into his writing. Describing Seaton’s night out with his cousins, he lets the reader know that “they walked down the bridge-slope in silence, crossing Castle Boulevard” and then “made their way through an animated Slab Square and descended homewards to the Meadows” (69). The author’s insider designation of the city’s Market Square and later mention of “the Trip” (81)—local shorthand for a notable public house—actualise the textual north of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, providing signals of relevance to Sillitoe’s own northern community. Significantly, Hitchcock also notes this “proliferation of markers,” but generalises “the

pub” and “football team” as “culturally specific to the British working class” (62), overlooking the novel’s distinctive Nottingham location.

Sillitoe’s novel is perhaps the least overtly reflexive of the “New Wave” texts in terms of the self-conscious northernness of its author and characters, and consequently offers less direct insight into the manifestation of that identity. However, as I have argued, the subtle poetics within the local “natter” of its narrative voices endows northern reflexivity with a yet more elaborate dimension, albeit one that is difficult to analyse in any objective manner. Further development of this “aesthetic” reflexivity is evident in the author’s later short stories, though as is evident from the work of Hitchcock and others, this aspect can easily be submerged in class-focused discourse.

Published in 1959, *Billy Liar* was Keith Waterhouse’s second novel, his earlier account of childhood in Yorkshire *There is a Happy Land* largely escaping the attentions of the journalistic “cultural event.” Commentators positioned the work as comedic “angry” text, possibly noting similarities between Billy Fisher’s subversive daydreaming and the comic insurrections of Amis’ *Lucky Jim*. However, in contrast to its “Movement” predecessor, Waterhouse’s narrative explicitly interrogates northernness via performances of dialect, resulting in the inclusion of place-based identity in numerous analyses of the text. Stuart Laing for example, notes Fisher’s “ironic targeting” of both an accepted traditional northernness and the bland popular culture that is rapidly effacing it: “The idea of a distinctive traditional northern identity is treated as illusory or anachronistic, while the new glossy consumerism is presented as merely absurd” (134). Dave Russell uses Waterhouse’s novel to support his assertion that the “New Wave” texts actually weakened northern “cultural capital;” Fisher’s exaggerated dialect performances parodying and cross-examining settled northernness (105). Such approaches are valuable in their

recognition of a distinctive regionality, and avoid the class-focused reductionism of Gray who places Fisher in opposition to authoritarianism, the new affluence, and its attendant “petty bourgeois mentality” (71–2). However, in my estimation *Billy Liar* represents the touchstone northern reflexive “New Wave” novel and I shall endeavour to demonstrate that Fisher’s linguistic play embodies an essential northernness that self-referentially explores fluctuations in this identity. Virtually all gradations of northernness that I have identified appear in Waterhouse’s text, and close reading reveals the interplay between expressions of dialect, the “ordinary,” and the “grim” in their reflex, reflexive, and aesthetic aspects.

From the outset of the narrative, Fisher is positioned as highly attuned to the northernness of his Stradhoughton hometown. Within his family this identity is organic, conversation as predictable and traditionally northern as “the route of the old No. 14 tram” (12). His mother’s Hoggartian reflex colloquialisms are rendered in the text as unbroken, unvarying strings of words, delivered as an “exchange of epigrams” (82) or triggered by regular events such as Fisher’s habitual lateness: “You’ll-set-off-one-of-these-days-and-meet-yourself-coming-back” (16). The family does not share Fisher’s awareness of these northern linguistic expressions, failing to appreciate his “Motherisms” coinage (16), and his humorous “documentary” narration of northern domestic life—“Ay Yorkshire breakfast scene”—further emphasises this observational perspective (8). Indeed, in order to communicate effectively with his parents and grandmother, Fisher is compelled to intensify a northern voice that education and his metropolitan pretensions have presumably diluted: “I slipped back a couple of notches into the family dialect and said: ‘Look, do you wanna know or don’t you? Cos if you do ah’ll tell you, and if you don’t ah won’t’ ” (14). More extreme situations require an almost physical reconfiguration of

northern speech, such as Mr Fisher's disparagement of his son's collection of books during which Billy realises that "the only way into the conversation was to counterfeit the old man's blunt and blunted way of talking. I set my lips into the same loose, flabby shape and said in the rough voice 'What's up, they're not hurting you, are they?' " (81).

Waterhouse's depiction of this process as linguistic forgery is telling, suggesting that the younger Fisher is removed from the northern "ordinary" of his father's speech. Yet Billy intentionally articulates this very ordinariness to negate the affectation associated with his role as booklover. Occasionally, the character even exhibits the emotional reversion to dialect that constitutes a more "reflex" performance of identity. Sensing his mother's attempt to "talk kindly" to him, Fisher replies with "ordinary" intonation and vocabulary: " 'Anyroad, we'll talk about it later,' a gruff and oblique statement of affection that, I could see, was received and understood" (21). Fisher's engagement with northern space is therefore not fully encompassed by the "comic stereotyping" that Ian Haywood describes (113), since it frequently incorporates that very northernness in its articulation.

Initially then, *Billy Liar* appears to situate its protagonist's self-conscious, mutable regional identity against a traditional, less reflective northernness. However, Fisher's comedic interrogations of attachments to place reveal the complexity of this generational opposition, questioning both the authenticity of Stradhoughton's sedimentary northernness and his own problematic articulations of belonging. Laing and Russell have both remarked upon the novel's challenge to an accepted north, and Joe Lampton's critique of "naturally" expressed northern identity was observed earlier within the textual space of the "New Wave" novels. Further expressions of this supposed core northernness must therefore be examined before turning to the markedly self-referential performances that Fisher employs in his negotiation of identity. From Billy's perspective, his "first

reserve” girlfriend epitomises the debased, instinctual northernness that frequently distances him from his family. Though Rita’s speech seems commensurate with an organic, traditional north in its “mill-tinged” timbre and colloquial phraseology—“Gerron home, yer mother wants yer boots for loafins!” (46)—Fisher denies her any northern agency, maintaining that her unconscious, reflex utterances are of no significance to her identity. Use of “clichés” is ubiquitous in Stradhoughton, but Rita’s “few rough phrases” are reduced to predictable patterns of sound that she relies on to “express the few thick slabs of meaning of which she was capable” (47). Fisher is not immune to the raw force of Rita’s northernness however, and comments upon his “falling chameleon-like into her own tongue” (48). His current interest Barbara fares little better linguistically, Fisher objecting to her affected, de-northed pronunciation: “I disliked the way she talked, tempering her flat northern voice with the mean, rounded vowels she had picked up at the Stradhoughton College of Commerce” (60). Farcically trapped between the two women, Fisher is also caught within the conflicting northern identities that they express, his disdain for the homely coarseness of Rita’s dialect at odds with the defiance he exhibits towards the southern vowel sounds invading Barbara’s native speech. It is arguably the former “reflex” northernness that the educated, escape-minded Fisher fails to appreciate, even though his reading suggests “ordinary” articulation of identity by Rita. He notes that Stradhoughton’s “Kit-Kat was now a coffee-house, or thought it was” and that its unconvincing cosmopolitanism is largely due to the presence of Rita who “could have transmogrified the Great Northern Hotel itself into a steamy milkbar with one wipe of her tea-cloth” (44). The faux-European café is representative of the external consumer culture noted by Laing and situated on the “Barbara” side of Fisher’s oppositional

equation, yet Fisher is unable to recognise Rita's "great, northern" bulwark of ordinary to this identity-effacing modernisation.

The narrative's most fruitful interactions with northernness occur as a result of Fisher's linguistic games, and it is his playful engagement with a third instance of "traditional" northern identity that questions the legitimacy of any *fundamental* north. Interrogating the northern pastoral lyricism of the "Man o' the Dales," a regular correspondent of the *Stradhoughton Echo*, Fisher transforms the regionally laudatory text by means of the "grim" and "ordinary." The newspaper's fond depictions of Stradhoughton's "honest native stone," "gleaming cobbled streets," and "piquant Yorkshire air" (23) constitute a variation on Dodd's "Lowryscape" in their presentation of a northern ideal-type, though in this case obscuring Blackness with the picturesque. This prelapsarian northernness, aligning with southern "True England" identifications apparent in the travel writing consulted in previous chapters, equates a "traditional north" with the rugged yet beautiful landscapes of a pre-industrial era. Fisher tackles these rhapsodic portrayals, forcing attention back to the Black ordinariness of Stradhoughton's "gleaming tarmacadam," "smell of burning paint," and non-descript commercial buildings "like any other High Street in Great Britain" (23). Though this "grim" challenge to the textual rendering of a less than authentic northernness appears to conform to performance strategies already analysed, it is complicated by a denial of regional distinctiveness— buildings hewn from Yorkshire's "honest native stone" demolished in the name of commerce and modernity. Though this featurelessness could be considered an aspect of the "grim" in evolution, Fisher's self-reflexive act reveals as problematic the erasure of identity experienced by northern place in the post war years. His subsequent imagined dialogue with the Man o' the Dales exposes similar fractures in

post-industrial northern identity, the iconic mills and factories of the Black landscape giving way to less awe-inspiring commercial facades: “ ‘Dark satanic mills I can put up with,’ I would say ... ‘but when it comes to dark satanic power stations, dark satanic housing estates, and dark satanic teashops—’ ” (24). Fisher’s “grim-ordinary” routine thus not only challenges the overly nostalgic “true north” identity advanced by and for the less reflective northerner but turns back upon itself, demonstrating the progressive splintering of a changing northernness that must successively renegotiate itself. His enacted debate approaches such a resolution in answer to the Man o’ the Dales’ criticism: “ ‘That’s the trouble with you youngsters ... You want progress, but you want all the Yorkshire tradition as well, You can’t have both.’ ‘I want progress ... But I want a Yorkshire tradition of progress’ ” (24).

Dialect adds a vital element to Fisher’s humorous, though I maintain authentic, northern performances. The routines that he and his workmate Arthur regularly indulge in incorporate dialect-centric language games, borrowing and exploration of other northern identities, and the re-enactment of conflicts between those identities. In formally analysing these articulations of northernness, it is therefore essential to engage with the comedic aspect whilst acknowledging their genuine function in the resolution and expression of identity based on belonging to place. The pair’s “trouble at t’mill routine” for example, plays out the archetypal encounter between pragmatic northern industrialist and his academically inclined son, alternating between dialect and the “high-pitched university voice” of the young escaper: “Ther’s allus been an Olroyd at Olroyd’s mill, and ther allus will be. Now you come ’ere with your college ways and you want none of it!” (41). The language play obviously mirrors Fisher’s disagreements with his own father, and indeed during such an exchange he explicitly overlays parental “reflex”

northernness with the characteristics of the lampooned mill owner: “I was seized, not with fear or anger but with sheer helplessness at the thought that these were beautiful Josiah Olroyd lines and I could not point them out to anybody, or even scoff” (80). Whilst this playacting doubtless provides Fisher with an outlet for the frustrations associated with his home life, the alignment of his family’s northern identity with that of the stereotypical northern patriarch appears to question the degree to which northernness can be essentially “organic.” In their more freeform linguistic games however, aesthetic engagement with vocabulary and stock phrases is evident, particularly in the creation and reconfiguration of northern-inflected language. Though Fisher remarks that the routine was inspired by their mimicry of the elderly Councillor Duxbury, the text effectively communicates the pleasure derived from this lexical embroidering and intensification of their own Yorkshire accent to the insider reader. Invented phrases such as “fair scritten anall” (30) and “Tha mun laik wi’ t’ gangling iron” (31) delivered “in broad dialect” resonate with an authentic northernness that is simultaneously comical and poetic. Their “wheezing voiced” parodies of Duxbury’s interminable reminiscences—“and course, ah’d nobbut one clog to mah feet when ah come to Stradhoughton” (31)—also engage with the “grim” and “ordinary” aspects of northern identity, providing a meta-layer of referentiality above the Councillor’s own performance. Fisher’s involuntary inclusion of Duxbury in this language game provides the novel’s pivotal encounter with regard to northern identity, but I would argue that this “aesthetic reflexivity” has gone unrecognised by previous commentators on the text. Remaining within a northern discourse, the joyfulness of Fisher’s parodic play resists reduction to simple oppositional mockery.

Prior to their chance meeting on the “pastoral slum” of Stradhoughton Moor (86), Fisher’s engagement with Councillor Duxbury’s northernness appears motivated by an assumption of “inauthentic” performance. The old man’s “rich, so-called Yorkshire relish voice” (88) is “practically unintelligible even to seasoned Yorkshiremen” (30), and to Fisher’s ear he speaks “like a Yorkshire butler filling in plot-lines in a dialect comedy” (91). Attempting to negotiate his own northernness against the uncertain landscapes of a rapidly changing Stradhoughton and the generational tensions within his family, Fisher transcribes an assumed, inauthentic northern identity onto the Councillor’s enactments. The imputation of “Lowryscaping” resonates with the insider reader as Fisher references northern “stock phrase” linguistic tags that frequently mark such performed or passively internalised northern imagery, stating that “he regarded every statement as a cue for his reminiscences, and no longer bothered to add ‘when I were a lad’ or ‘fot’ty year ago’ ” (88). Nevertheless, Duxbury’s dialect seems to elicit a characteristically reflexive response from his employee: “I always talked to Councillor Duxbury in his own dialect, half-mockingly, half-compulsively” (88), and Fisher struggles to rebalance his performance when he becomes aware of Duxbury’s interrogation of his own northernness: “ ‘T’old dialect that’s going,’ he said. I suddenly realized that he knew perfectly well that I did not talk in dialect all the time ... I was trying to modify the dialect so that I could drop out of it completely within the minute” (90). However, Duxbury’s greater mastery of the northern language game thwarts his escape, compelling Fisher to admit “ ‘Aye, ah’m just about thraiped wi’ Stradhoughton.’ I remembered too late that ‘thraiped’ was a word Arthur and I had made up. ‘How does ta mean?’ ‘It’s neither muckling nor mickling,’ I said, using another invented phrase in my complete panic” (91). The endgame of Fisher’s encounter with Duxbury is critical. Having finally realised that the Councillor is “not as

daft as he looked,” Fisher is gently chided for his inferior performance of northernness, Duxbury questioning his claim to this specific articulation of identity via the “ordinary’s” humble-pride: “Ah’ve had no education, ah had to educate myself, but that’s no reason for thee to copy t’way *I* talk” (92). Fisher senses “some kind of infinite wisdom” behind the words and feels “genuinely ashamed.” Duxbury concludes the performance with a dialect pronouncement that Fisher interprets as “something sage and shrewd” though beyond his comprehension, perhaps in common with the insider reader: “Sither. Tha’rt a young man. Tha’s got a long way to go, But tha can’t do it by thisen. Now think on” (92). He is left with “a feeling, one that I wanted to keep. It was a feeling of peace and melancholy” (93) that encapsulates the wistful, semi-humorous assertion of identity with which the Councillor negotiates the changing north. It is recognition of Fisher’s *authentic* northern engagement with Duxbury that I feel is lacking in previous readings of the text, notably in Russell’s otherwise excellent survey of literary northernness. Locating the novel at a point of “change in attitude to regional ‘character’” he concludes that though Waterhouse has not discounted the actuality of northern identity, his text presents a satirical critique of “too slavish an adherence to stereotypical versions of it” (105). For Russell, the risk of outsiders internalising a northern “comic grammar” (272) contributes to the “undermining” potential of *Billy Liar*, but I would argue that for both Fisher and the insider reader, the profoundly self-reflexive Councillor provides a substantial demonstration of applied northern identity.

Fisher’s poetic engagement with northern dialect in the course of the encounter is in itself significant, and raises questions concerning Waterhouse’s own relation to his native Yorkshire. The adjectival “thraiped” (30, 91) suggests linguistic play around the venerable northern dialect term “threap,” expressing scolding or rebuke but also an

“obstinate assertion” that “urges acceptance” upon a person (“Threap,” def. 1–2). “Thraiped with Stradhoughton” thus implies Fisher’s struggle with the town’s contradictory voices—the “settled” northernness of Rita and his parents, differing articulations of tradition by Man o’ the Dales and Councillor Duxbury, and the cosmopolitan “new north” to which Barbara and the Kit-Kat aspire. Fisher’s manipulation of the dialect term seemingly incorporates and navigates these traditional-modern and organic-performed dichotomies of northern identity. Similarly, his pairing of “muckling nor mickling” draws upon the proverb “many a mickle makes a muckle,” itself based on a modern distortion of “many a little makes a mickle,” the northern dialect word “mickle” indicating “a large amount” in the phrase (“Mickle,” def. 4). Fisher’s language game appears to engage the classic Yorkshire adage “it’s neither nowt nor summat,” though his repurposing of an extant construction might suggest the erosion of dialect that Duxbury indicates in his own performance. Does Fisher misremember the traditional stock phrase in line with its earlier deformation, or is enjoyment of its phonetics responsible for the transposition? The author’s decision to employ these “shifted” northern words rather than parodying the dialect outright also appears to indicate a more complex relationship with northern identity than critics have suggested. Waterhouse is perhaps also negotiating changing northern place, and indicating the genuine belonging to place that dialect mediates, especially in its performed aspect.

Fisher’s dreams of escape from his grim hometown and equally unglamorous position as an undertaker’s clerk revolve around a career as a comedy writer in London, though this would not entirely sever him from the ordinary and northern place, as he imagines “returning to Stradhoughton as the world-famous comedian, doing charity concerts and never losing the common touch” (112). His disastrous practice performance

at Stradhoughton's "New House" richly illustrates the problematic dimensions of his wider performed northernness and provides an effective summation of the shifting, intermediary positions he traverses in the course of its exploration. The venue itself occupies a similarly equivocal position, the commercial modernity of this "enormous drinking barracks" at odds with the traditional north of its patrons—"refugees from the warm terrace-end pubs that had been pulled down" (113). The comic turn that Fisher delivers from the stage constitutes a double performance of northernness, his engagement with the northern institution of music hall underlining the decline of that tradition in the post-war decades. Re-enactment of the classic variety act with its intensified dialect—"Ah'm coortin', It's a Wakefield lass" (119–20)—suggests a meta-layer of comedy typical of Fisher's explorations of northernness, and as is the case with his off-stage performances appears to involve both humorous play with and attachment to the reserve of northern identity. His enjoyment of this self-referential interaction is dispelled by the arrival of his father, whose "sardonic observation" of the act seems to once again question Fisher's entitlement to an identity claimed by an older, declaredly northern generation. Having previously been mocked for his "non-ordinary" literary ambition by a group of regulars, Fisher receives an outright challenge to the authenticity of his performance and indeed northern identity: " 'So t'bookie says, come on nark it—' '*Nark it?*' exploded Freddy Platt triumphantly. '*Nark it?* ... That's not Yorkshire! That's London talk! He thinks he's in London' " (122). Fisher's failed performance of northernness within the northern performance reveals the complexities associated with the articulation of belonging to changing place. In addition, the hostile audience demonstrates the resistance afforded by a reflex or performed-natural northernness to such interrogatory practice. Platt's final denunciation of the recital emphasises the centrality of an authentic northernness to such

reflexive playfulness: “ ‘By! *Tha* dropped a clanger there, Billy!’ said Freddy Platt. ‘Nark it? *Tha* didn’t learn *that* in Yorkshire!’ ” (124).

I shall not subject David Storey’s *This Sporting Life* to an overly detailed analysis, partly because its limited expressions of northern identity echo many of those already discussed, and as Stuart Laing notes, its central character rarely provides commentary on his own actions (71). In fact, due to the novel’s focus on Machin’s experiences as a professional rugby player, his northernness is often indistinguishable from the performed masculinity that the sport demands. Stuart Laing mentions Storey’s own observation of the masculine/physical and feminine/cerebral dualities across his first two novels (74) and I shall examine the more self-reflective *Flight into Camden* in the following chapter, but it is also informative to note the north-south dimension of these oppositions as Laing indicates. We observed earlier how Gaskell’s *North and South* accentuated established associations of the tough, “ordinary,” masculine North and soft, cultured, feminine South, and the female protagonist of Storey’s London-based novel certainly provides more insight into her northernness within her “escaper” narrative. However, Machin’s on-pitch performances also appear to parallel aspects of northernness already discussed, in particular the exaggeration of “grimness” and “ordinariness” when confronted by an “outsider” audience. Expectation of the player’s demonstration of strength and ferocity equates with characterisations of the North as brutish and uncivilised that provoke defensive hyper-ordinariness and intensification of dialect. Machin is aware of this sporting masculinity, frequently describing himself as an “animal” or “performing ape,” and as mentioned this often obscures more place-based expressivity such as observation of his “owner’s” attempted articulations of linguistic belonging: “Weaver has certain mannerisms, and not only of speech, which he thinks reflect his background of industrial

democracy” (7). Storey’s representation by the novel’s publisher also mirrors the character’s exhibitory position. The back cover flap of the first edition describes him as “twenty seven and the son of a Yorkshire miner. Built like a young grizzly bear, he joined the Leeds Rugby Football club at the age of nineteen in order to pay for an art education,” effectively displaying him as a prize specimen of the Angry Young Northern Writer.

The last of the core “New Wave” texts, Stan Barstow’s *A Kind of Loving*, provides perhaps the most sensitive textual expression of northernness, balancing the acute self-consciousness of *Room at the Top* and *Billy Liar* with the natural, authentic norths of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *This Sporting Life*. Like Sillitoe’s writing, it incorporates dialect, which though lightly and naturalistically rendered, exhibits a marked degree of localization, vocabulary such as “brussen” (76) meaning “aggressively stubborn” eluding definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and perhaps significant only for the insider community of the novel’s West Riding locale. In addition to providing attachment to place, Barstow’s use of dialect frequently demonstrates the subtle self-referentiality characterising expressions of northern identity, particularly those of an older generation that other writers have condensed to a degree. The text therefore provides a valuable demonstration of the continuum of northern reflexivity that I have posited, and to an extent obviates the problem of an innate or “organic” northernness in its depiction of identities beyond that of a conspicuously self-aware protagonist. During the wedding reception at the novel’s opening for example, Vic Brown describes his father’s response when mocked for his desire to send his son to college: “ ‘Ey up! Ey up!’ the Old Feller says, rising to it. ‘Just because we’re getting’ a decent livin’ wage after all this time everybody’s on to us. ... If you think you can addle twenty pound a week in t’ pit, you can come an’ have a try’ ” (26). Mr. Brown’s defensive articulation of dialect and the “ordinary” is

familiar, but Vic's recognition of its performativity coupled with Barstow's substitution of "earn" with the archaic northern word "addle" enhances the process of affirmation. Similarly, the author enables Mrs. Brown to comment on her husband's "ordinary" posturing as he justifies his preference for "t'bandroom" as the reception venue: " 'There's a difference between a decent send-off and a Society do,' the Old Feller says, 'I'm nobbut a collier, y' know, not a mill-owner.' 'An' you don't let anybody forget it ...' " (20).

The novel captures the subtleties of encounters between these varying expressions of northernness, as well as exploring engagements with those external to its textual northern community. Though northern trans-generational interactions tend to be characterised by the projection of "ordinary" humble-pride by the senior party as observed previously in Bennett's "From One Generation To Another," Barstow's delicate treatment of the dynamic communicates the "authentic" element within performances of northernness. Brown notes with surprise his father's "touch of pride" when telling his friend that his son is now employed as a draughtsman, and Herbert's response exhibits a similar mixture of admiration tempered with a self-referential "ordinary" intended to afford the older men a superior position in terms of northern attachment: " 'A draughtsman, eh? That's better na t' pit eh? ... This is a golden age for young fowk, Arthur,' the little chap says. 'Not like our young days. Then there wa' nowt else but pit or t' mills.' " (131). Correspondingly, Vic Brown situates his new brother-in-law David in terms of accent and belonging, noting that he "talks with a cut-glass accent and comes from the south" (15), and his father's interaction with the outsider demonstrates a grimly-proud negotiation of this difference. Observing the classical, though soot-coated municipal buildings of the West Riding, David wonders if there is a "typically Yorkshire

architecture.” Brown’s response self-consciously and humorously articulates his attachment to the Black landscape: “ ‘Aye, Collinson’s mill,’ the Old Man says, grinning. ‘That one wi’ t’ biggest chimney o’ t’ lot.’ ” The younger man then acknowledges that the North isn’t “as bad as it’s painted” and that since living in Yorkshire he has been “pleasantly surprised,” failing to appreciate Brown’s insider negotiation of that very aspect. In contrast, and accentuated by dialect use, his father-in-law demonstrates awareness of southern perceptions of the bleak north, affirming northern “tough” belonging to place whilst playfully excluding David: “ ‘It’s not everybody’s cup o’ tea,’ the Old Man admits. ‘Some fowk like summat a bit well, *softer*, if you know what I mean’ ” (101–2).

In common with the other authors of the “New Wave,” Barstow is particularly successful when engaging with the post-war generation’s traversals of northernness, and *A Kind of Loving* provides an effective textual space for Vic Brown’s articulation and recombination of the elements of northern identity. In essence, the narrative describes Brown’s ambivalent situation between the “settled” northern heritage embodied by his working class parents and the affluent, modernised culture commensurate with his youth, white collar occupation, and aspirant middle class wife Ingrid. His specifically northern negotiation of these conflicting identities employs “grim,” “ordinary,” and dialect performances, but Barstow’s nuanced rendition imparts them with the profound reflexivity that such multivariate interactions require. Brown’s humorous response to Ingrid’s holiday postcard for example expresses “grim” attachment to his hometown of Cressley and its community whilst simultaneously challenging the de-northered aspect of his wife’s identification with a trivial and middle-class mass culture. Confronting her with their own northern locatedness, he returns a picture of Cressley Town Hall complete with

his “grim” inscription: “I don’t think I’ll come here again for my holidays because it’s a mucky place and it rains all the time” (174). Brown reaffirms the belonging conferred by this consciousness of northern grimness in the opening of the following chapter, observing that “[t]he days draw out, the weather gets warmer, and it’s what we call summer, with a bitter laugh when we’ve said it” (174). In contrast, his attempt to counter the pretentiousness of his colleague Rawlinson with a northern “ordinary” performance is complicated by his own appreciation of classical music, an identification that distances him from the popular “yawping crooners” beloved by Ingrid, but provokes her to a parallel accusation in which she claims that “people” only like such music “because they think it makes them Somebody” (182). Having asserted his northernness against Rawlinson’s outlandish preference for French cinema—“I don’t mind these foreign films when there’s a bit of tit or summat to see”—Brown turns the dialect component of his “ordinary” performance back on himself in attrition: “I’m a bit sorry now that I’ve gone out of my way to make him think I’m just another cloth-head” (47–8).

Significantly, the author accommodates a subsequent confrontation with Rawlinson in which he demonstrates Brown’s resolution of this quandary via the tutelage of another workmate, Conroy. This communicated adaptation of northern identity within the textual insider community conceivably extends to the novel’s readership, and the largely unacknowledged value of the “New Wave” novels and their cinematic renditions may lie in their provision of an imagined but fully actualised space in which such communal incongruities can be explored. Certainly, Conroy’s demonstration of an “ordinary” capable of accommodating contemporary tensions within and around “high” and “low” culture and constructions of “traditional northern working class” and “modern affluent consumerism” enhances Vic Brown’s repertoire of northern performativity.

Following his impromptu performance at the annual Staff Party, Conroy remarks to Rawlinson and his girlfriend “Pity I forgot me fiddle ... I’d’ve given you a violin concerto. A bit of Debewssy, eh?” Initially, Brown fails to recognise the performed nature of Conroy’s northern “ordinary,” assuming that his “brussen” physiognomy and demeanour precludes any degree of cultural sophistication. The girlfriend’s retort—“Debussy didn’t write a violin concerto”—affirms this assumption, correcting both Conroy’s cultural knowledge and inflected pronunciation (149). After the couple has left however, Conroy laughingly remarks that he wouldn’t “be surprised if Rawly doesn’t know Debussy from the Chancellor of the Exchequer,” crucially as Brown notes pronouncing the name “like the blonde bit did,” leading to his realisation that “he was laying it on thick for Rawly’s benefit” and that there might be “more to Conroy than meets the eye” (149–50). Conroy expounds his neo-ordinary strategy with northern relish, expressing his disdain for Rawlinson’s air of superiority and cultural name-dropping: “He can very likely tell you that Tolstoy has duck-egg and chips for his tea on March 13, 1888, but you ask him what they called Anna Karenina’s fancy man and he’ll look at you gone out” (150). This novel articulation of the “ordinary” negotiates attachment to the “real heavyweight stuff” of culture, intensified dialect transforming its hallowed nomenclature to the local and thereby claiming possession. Brown appears to take the performance on board, learning from Conroy’s resolution of the contradiction: “You sort of never associate that sort of thing with a liking for beer and dirty stories. Least, I never have till now” (151).

Dialect, as I have repeatedly stressed, is integral to expressions of regional identity, and Brown’s mutable northernness is characterised by both aesthetic and affirmative verbal performance. The sparse lyrical exchange between Vic and his workmate Jimmy Slade recalls the self-conscious enjoyment of northern speech evident in *Billy Liar*, though

its more naturalistic tone also anchors the young draughtsmen in the ordinary: “ ‘Now then, cock.’ ‘Now then, Jimmy.’ ‘Back to it, eh?’ ‘Ay, back to it.’ We go up the steps together” (44–5). Early in the novel, Brown engages with his mother’s “stock phrases” in a parenthetical aside to the reader, humorously interrogating the older generation’s reflex northern behaviour whilst taking pleasure in the rhythm and resonance of her “ordinary” dialect poetics. Initially disapproving of her daughter’s outsider fiancé, Brown notes that she was perturbed at being unable to

chew the fat about David’s background. (His mother was a so-and-so—y’ know, they kept that draper’s shop in Whitely Street—and his father was a somebody else. He had a sister that ran away with a feller from Wigan and left three kids for the husband to bring up.) All that kind of stuff; it’s the breath of life to the Old Lady. (15–16)

The narrator’s acknowledgement of the identity-affirming function of such language and ability to improvise authentically within the northern domestic chronicle again suggests that this self-consciously linguistic play is irreducible to simple mockery. Barstow’s writing communicates this balance between semi-humorous demonstrations of northernness and genuine attachment to place superbly, and his protagonist’s affirmations of belonging via dialect illustrate the complexity of this fundamental attribute. The intensity of Brown’s northern voice oscillates during the course of the narrative, transmitting or concealing identity along a continuum of performativity. The broadening of his baseline lightly inflected speech when conversing with his parents and “rough” friend Willy constitutes a typical assertion of “ordinariness” to counter his partial displacement by education and profession, though this is tempered by a more organic communality. Nevertheless, Brown is highly conscious of the avowal of identity conveyed by dialect, significantly noting that because of his accent “[a]nybody can place me straight-away” (229), and when angered and embarrassed by Ingrid’s assumed voice and apparent denial of belonging when

speaking to a couple from Essex, exhibits a reciprocal proclamation of northernness: "I've talked to better people than them in my time but they have to take me as I am, Yorkshire accent an' all. I don't put it on for anybody" (230). In contrast to his wife's deceptive concealment of attachment to northern place, Brown "puts across" northern identity in a simultaneously performed and authentic manner, further evident in his "ordinary" humbly-proud "ignorance" regarding the southern cultural landmark of Eton College: "You sounded as if you were auditioning for the BBC and trying to kid 'em you'd come straight from Eton, or wherever it is they send those posh bints" (230). Though this pejorative term for "girl" is not exclusive to northern dialects, for the insider reader Brown's articulation seems to enhance his disparagement of Ingrid's pretence via this regional distortion of the illustrious all-boys English boarding school.

Brown is not always at ease with northern place however, and ultimately it is language that thwarts his escape from his reluctant marriage to Ingrid. As he concedes, place was instrumental to this decision "there's only one thing to do round here when you put a girl in the family way and that's marry her" (269), and following their breakup he is burdened by the linguistic expression of this communal morality, anticipating the bulwark of stock phrases that his mother in particular would present: "I wanted advice, not a row with all the old proverbs thrown in" (272). In contrast to his earlier language games, Brown is faced with the inescapable finality of these truisms, and is horrified when even his trusted sister confronts him accordingly: " 'Well, after all, Vic, you've made your own bed, haven't you?' I'm stunned, as though somebody's hit me over the head. 'You say that? That's what everybody else'll say. Can't you say nothing else?' " (270). As Stuart Laing remarks, the novel's title echoes the northern grim-ordinary wisdom of "making the best of it" (76), and finally its protagonist "mun like it, or lump it."

The vanguard novels of the “New Wave” are distinctive in their insider depictions of concrete northern place, which though generally fictional constitute an authentic textual North that itself negotiates previous problematic constructions of northernness. The characters populating these spaces similarly interrogate such identities, but, as I have argued, do so by articulating northernness back onto itself to varying degrees, maintaining attachment to place whilst acknowledging its changing nature. As journalistic analyses indicated, the late 1950s marked a point of significant upheaval, and the physical and social transformation of “settled” northern place was indeed instrumental to the conformation of these narratives. However, though superficially oppositional or satirical, the texts embody northern identity in the full complexity of its expression, communicating its intricate dances of performativity and belonging, accompanied by aesthetic enactments of dialect. Their authors and characters are at once natural and self-conscious, humorous and profound, and convey a lived northernness to the insider reader that encompasses the nuances of an asserted and assimilated northern identity. In the case of the “New Wave” novels, these narratives were realised visually within the striking iconic cycle of films that, as Dave Russell notes, constituted “a significant moment of cultural change and creativity for the region” (183), but it is the authors’ later less famous works that I shall position as the highpoint of northern representation. Engaging with a substantially transformed North and northernness, frequently from the perspective of a northerner in the South, these relatively neglected texts further enhance self-reflective expression and engage the insider community of author, reader, and characters to an unprecedented degree.

Chapter VI

“You can’t have your independence ... and your mother’s pies as well”: After the Wave,
after the North?

Every wave must eventually ebb, and the “abrupt disappearance” of the northern realist cinematic moment by 1963 was accompanied by a southward turn of the cultural gaze to the glamour and hedonism of “Swinging London” (Laing 109, 138). Though the correspondence between novels and films of the “New Wave” has provided a useful organisational strategy, it is less easy to identify a precise endpoint for the literary phenomenon. Certainly, the authors’ later works were largely overshadowed by those associated with the cultural moment, as Allan Massie perceptively observes: “Stan Barstow is one of these novelists, like Alan Sillitoe and John Braine, cursed by an early success that the public delights to remember while neglecting the author’s more interesting mature novels” (24). Laing has also commented on the difficulties experienced by authors continuing to write in a northern located realist mode after the waning of the sociologically fixated criticism of the 1950s, noting that as a result they were “generally expelled from the canon of contemporary serious novelists” (81). Consistent with the mid-1960s change of focus to the metropolis, the authors’ “post New Wave” texts pay greater attention to southern space, yet in doing so retain their characteristic northern sensibility. These forays “beyond the closed community” by characters seeking gratification or even liberation (Laing 77) closely mirror their creators’ relocation to the capital following the success of earlier novels, and this resituating of perspective coupled with reflections on the

northern writing phenomenon itself bring additional layers of reflexivity to the later texts. Awareness of both the “New Wave’s” decline, and their status as acclaimed “northern authors” contributed to the writers’ self-conscious turning of northernness onto the process of its inscription, challenging reduction to a “wave” or intentional literary alliance. Stan Barstow’s later novels are especially significant in this respect, his “New Wave” writer-character Wilf Cotton engaging with northern authorship, the real-world texts contemporary with his work, and his own belonging to place. In effect, the authors’ later novels negotiate not just northern identity, but problems of its textual expression, particularly in the wake of the journalistic event that brought them to prominence.

In his subchapter “The road south,” Dave Russell discusses the complex dimensions of the north-south relationship and the ways in which northern literature has refined simple oppositional constructs, capturing the contradictory aspects of migrations to and back from the metropolis. In addition to the incursions of northerners and southerners into respective foreign territory, he identifies a distinctive northern “returner” narrative (95) also described by Alan Sinfield as a “revisiting fable” (267) in which the aspirant escaper confronts a place and people left behind. Russell notes that such north-south interactions have featured in literature since the mid-nineteenth century, and we have already examined Margaret Hale’s exploration of Darkshire in *North and South*, the southern odyssey embarked upon by Jess Oakroyd in *The Good Companions*, and Joe Lampton’s troubled return to his Dufton hometown, amongst others. However, the increasing attention paid by the “New Wave” writers to “London’s disruptive beckoning” in both their personal and textual realities leads Russell to once again question the novels’ affirmative contribution to northern identity: “It is one of the many ironies surrounding the North’s most fashionable fictional moment that it was created by books working the

themes of provincial entrapment and escape so intensely that they underlined the very cultural imbalance that they briefly appeared to be addressing” (99). I certainly agree with both Russell and Dodd (22) that the “escaped” author risks inscribing the text with nostalgia for lost place and identity, and this is particularly relevant to the post “New Wave” novels which continue to negotiate a rapidly changing and even vanishing north. Nevertheless, as was evident from the texts analysed in the previous chapter, northernness incorporates engagement with these very aspects of identity, and I maintain that the distinct perspective afforded by separation from local space promotes and demands accentuated expressions of northern self-reflection. Proceeding chronologically with a close reading of the key northern-focused later novels, I hope to demonstrate this zenith of self-conscious northernness and its coincidence with a distancing from or erasure of landscapes tightly bound to that identity. In doing so, the prospect of a “post North” and the potential for attachment to such a space must also be addressed.

David Storey’s *Flight into Camden* (1960) establishes this “escaper” narrative trend, his protagonist Margaret Thorpe seeking refuge in the anonymity of the capital city after taking up with a married man. Her reflections on this geographical distancing from northernness incorporate generational and socioeconomic dynamics common to the “New Wave” novels, and interactions with northern identity are especially visible as she narrates her brother Michael’s own articulations. The southern-feminine aspect of Storey’s second novel was mentioned briefly in the preceding chapter in reference to the more insular, northern masculinity of *This Sporting Life*, but Margaret’s greater sensitivity to manifestations of identity should not be reduced to gender-specific psychology. The novel necessarily engages more fully with northernness than Storey’s exploration of the professional sportsman’s performativity, and “ordinary” feminisation of the “scholarship

boy” role into which Michael is often manoeuvred is also evident in the text. Margaret’s self-aware narration of conflicting identities significantly enhances negotiations of northernness within the text, explicitly identifying the mechanics of its performance. This is particularly apparent in her description of Uncle Jack’s humble-proud challenging of Michael, a confrontation that seems to undermine the younger man’s normally pronounced northernness, forcing him to an unhappy, lacklustre resituating of himself via the “ordinary.” Drawing attention to Michael’s superior occupation, Jack inquires “How do you like it, then? A college professor and that.” Margaret is conscious of her brother’s discomfort: “He laughed awkwardly. His emotions quickly replaced one another. ‘I’m not a professor yet,’ Michael said. ‘I doubt if I get paid three-quarters of what you do’ ” (8). Having humbly belittled his nephew’s non-manual educated work—“If thy’s got any brains in your body you won’t work like us”—Jack asks what Michael did before he taught at the university: “ ‘Research work in a factory.’ He said it clumsily. He hated the conversation” (8–9). Storey renders the corresponding “ordinary” assault upon Margaret in a markedly different manner; Jack deflating the appositely northern but elevated National Coal Board, and domesticating his niece’s work in the industry: “ ‘Are you still typing, Margaret?’ ‘She’s a secretary now,’ my mother said. ‘At the N.C.B.’ ‘At the coal hole! If that isn’t something’ Jack laughed” (9). Though the element of humour in their uncle’s performance should not be overlooked, its effects on Michael in particular highlight the frequently uncomfortable renegotiations of identity incumbent upon individuals deviating from the norms of settled northernness. Such interactions could be interpreted in terms of purely class and generational difference, but this omits the belonging associated with Jack’s expressive utilisation of dialect. Crucially, Michael’s

subsequent performances of northernness that realign his identity to a space overlying the established but dissipating north occupied by his uncle would also be overlooked.

As indicated above, Margaret Thorpe provides interpretations of northernness throughout the narrative, and this overt acknowledgement of place-based identity in performance suggests the character's (and arguably her author's) corresponding heightened northern self-consciousness. It is plausible that the conspicuous textual and cinematic presentations of northernness accompanying the "New Wave" promoted contemplation of attachment to place within its insider communities, and I previously described the framework of northern ideal types used to promote David Storey as a distinctive writer. Additionally, textual and actual departure from northern place, and awareness of outsider identities may also contribute to the more explicatory demonstrations of northernness characterising the later novels. However, these observations upon northern behaviour remain firmly attached to specific place, and though seemingly distanced and even semi-anthropological as Russell fears (92–3), their self-referencing analyses constitute highly intricate expressions of identity. Margaret presents successive readings of her brother's northern expressivity, noting his "ordinary" projection of dialect at a university party, which for her clearly communicates his intent: "He was in a large group now and talking so intensely that I could hear his voice above the others in the room. Not his words, but the eager, bursting impetuosity, and his aggressive northern accent" (14). As he teases her for "picking herself a winner" when she chats with another man at the gathering, she notes his proclivity for humorous northern performance, hinting at its communication of shared belonging within the insider community: "He often resorted to a northern accent or colloquialism when he wanted to deride someone for whom he had an affection" (18). Michael reaffirms this observation in

the narrative, informing his brother Alec “in a broad accent” that Margaret has “got tangled up with a right load of trouble” (37). The primary character’s discourse on northernness within the text appears to verify many of the nuances of performance that I have noted in earlier novels, ranging from Michael’s emotional reversion to dialect when discussing his forthcoming marriage: “Michael reassured [his mother] colloquially. ‘It’s not a thing I’d want to rush into any road, I’ve waited long enough to mek sure’ ” to his comical interrogation of parsimonious, phlegmatic Yorkshire identity in “ordinary” reference to his fiancée’s wedding ring: “ ‘when we’re married,’ he said, assuming an accent, ‘it’ll be pawned. It’s only the bait on the hook is that, you know’ ” (62).

Shifts along the continuum of northern reflexivity are pronounced in the novel, suggesting that the narrator is simultaneously exploring and performing northernness rather than simply providing commentary. In one of the text’s most touching episodes, Margaret and her lover Howarth find solace in the family home whilst her parents are away at Michael’s wedding. Their conscious, yet honest engagement with the recurrent northern motif of tea—served in her father’s pint mug—reconnects them with the solidity of a “traditional” northernness from which their unconventional relationship and exodus to London will sever them: “ ‘I’ve brought you some tea.’ His eyes glowed. ‘That’s lovely,’ he said in a deep northern accent. ... He lifted up the pot. ‘I look a real workman with this’ ” (93). Self-reflection arguably extends out of the text to its author, Storey’s own negotiation of northern identity implicit in Howarth’s uneasy positioning between the traditional but “Lowryscape” prone northernness of the Miners’ Gala, and the affected northern poetry “about factory chimneys and slag heaps and collieries” performed by Ben, the “industrial Don Quixote” of the local literary group. As Margaret notes, the former “had saddened him. But this he hated” (33–4). As a “northern writer,” Storey

appears mindful of his own belonging to place and the challenges accompanying its authentic textual expression in relation to a changing North.

Of course, *Flight into Camden* primarily augments the spectrum of northern performativity when engaging with external spaces, centred on Margaret as a northerner in the South. Though the plot essentially positions an established, restrictive northernness in opposition to the more fluid and liberal ethos of the metropolis, its main focus is the tensions within an identity no longer encompassed by settled or traditional constructions of regional belonging. Furthermore, Storey's depictions of northerners outside the North incorporate such disparities, notably expressed in relation to dialect. When her father travels to London to persuade her to return home, Margaret is struck by the incongruity of his northern accent (147), suggesting her related distancing from his more "reflex" northernness, and negotiation of an identity rooted in but not straightforwardly bound to northern place. Mr Thorpe, in contrast, is perturbed by "the accents: it was all unreliable, the sounds alone weren't trustworthy. 'All them spivs,' he said, submitting to it, but drawing up hate and ridicule into himself at its strangeness" (148). Though Margaret does eventually leave London, her father is unsuccessful in his initial attempt to convince her, and Storey's heart-breaking depiction of his homeward return encapsulates the distance between the South and their now respective norths: "The station was full of the long emptiness of his journey north, the hours he would sit alone" (156).

Following the initial success of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Alan Sillitoe continued to write prolifically, embracing many topics and literary forms, but I shall limit my analysis to a number of his short stories published in the two decades following the "New Wave" that demonstrate pronounced engagement with northern place and identity. As discussed in the previous chapter, Sillitoe's first novel expresses a manifestly "ordinary"

northern reflexivity that is relatively inconspicuous in its performance, characterised by “poetic” utilisation of dialect and marked attachment to regional place. This distinctive and particular textual northernness is sustained across many of his later works, though in common with other texts evaluated in this section, author and characters often exhibit an intensified self-referentiality in their navigation of spaces distanced from the North in terms of both geography and identity.

Sillitoe’s own experiences of departure and return are evident in *The Decline and Fall of Frankie Buller* (1959), in which the narrator “Alan” runs into a childhood friend when revisiting his hometown: “ ‘Ow are yer goin’ on these days, Frankie?’ I asked, revelling in the old accent, though knowing that I no longer had the right to use it” (126). Sillitoe left his native Nottingham in the early 1950s, and tellingly in his retrospective of the “cultural moment,” Colin Wilson describes their first meeting concurrent with the publication of this initial collection of short stories: “Alan was slim and slightly built, and—like me—had taken the trouble to get rid of his Midlands accent” (112). The escaped writer protagonist of *Frankie Buller* expresses the full complexity of renegotiated northernness in this phrase, his genuine pleasure in the articulation of dialect tinged with anxiety over belonging to place. Sillitoe’s later work *Canals* (1968) further explores this problematic attachment, interrogating “grim” and “ordinary” aspects of northern identity via the returner’s articulation of the same. Dick, a teacher living in London, attempts to reconcile his prior northern history and belonging with the refashioned northernness that he brings back to his hometown. Bonding to place negotiated via the “grim” is intensified to an almost aesthetic degree for the northern émigré: “There was a terrible beauty in the city he belonged to that he had never found anywhere else ... In spite of petrol, the reek of upholstery, and fag-smoke coming from a bus-door when it stopped near him, he held

onto this purity of vision that made him believe life was good and worth living.” Sillitoe’s protagonist is aware of submitting to nostalgia, but the semi-humorous yet authentic element of his “grim” performance allows him to assimilate the belonging he requires from the landscape: “Feeling himself too old to be indulging in such fleshly reminiscence, he enjoyed it all the more, not as a vice but as if it were food to a starving man” (258). Indeed, the author negotiates the “Lowryscale” trap of rose-coloured Blackness in his “ordinary” play with the text, wryly skewering his own literary language in co-performance with the character, whilst maintaining its evocative intertwining of the temporal and locational: “The uterine flight of reminiscence, the warm piss of nostalgia as he stood by a hedge and relieved himself where the shaded pathway stretched emptily in both directions” (258). Adaptations of northern reflexivity to traverse the convolutions of belonging to place are frequently complicated by contradictory elements within the renegotiated identity. When Dick calls in at the Ramrod and Musket for a pint, he admits that “[h]e had come here thinking he might meet someone known from years ago” but regards this as a “lapse” in the navigation of his return, experiencing a “nerve-racking mixture of pride and weakness” (259). These emotions appear to conflict both in quality and association, the pride derived from localised northern attachment at odds with his successful “escape” to a career in London. In the same way he is simultaneously weakened by separation from northern place and his attempt to retreat into an uncomplicated belonging. The emblematic communal space of the pub provides the nexus for engagement with his original northernness embodied by his cousin Bernard, who bolstering his own stasis with the “ordinary,” argues “Well, you can’t beat the town you were brought up in—dragged up, I mean!” Dick’s rejoinder conveys the painful

necessity of reworking northern identity to accommodate attachment to a shifting north: “Still, ... you can’t go home again, I know that” (262).

As I have argued, Sillitoe’s writing is preeminent in its inscription of a “northern poetic” characterised by highly localised dialect phrases, structures, and rhythms that confers belonging via an aesthetic experience common to the insider community. His 1981 short story *No Name in the Street* provides an informative illustration of this “ordinary” lyricism, demonstrating an additional dimension of the post “New Wave” intensification of northern reflexivity in its self-aware yet naturalistic linguistic play. As was the case with *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, the authorial narrative frequently interleaves and converses with the characters’ speech, emphasising the textual insider community and extending participation to the northern reader. For example, the story’s protagonist Albert repeatedly berates his dog, though grudging affection seems communicated within his Nottingham-accented speech: “Here we are, you aggravating bogger ... You get on my bleddy nerves” (478). The author echoes his expressions and sentiment, concurring “the bleddy thing was deaf as a haddock when it came to telling it what to do,” infusing the text with a localised, internal “gossip.” Sillitoe’s apparent intrusion into the narrative furnishes it with something of a communal northern voice, commenting on Albert’s predicament and inviting a sympathetic mutuality: “it wasn’t a bleddy sight. The dog was eating him out of house and home ... So you had to do something to earn a few bob extra” (479). This dialect-inspired belonging is accentuated by the author’s use of specifically local vocabulary that may be opaque to a general readership, but performs both a binding and aesthetic function for the insider, who is conscious of, and has claim to, its abstruseness. “Rammel”—a term used regionally to describe miscellaneous rubbish—occurs with some regularity in Sillitoe’s text, and the removal men in *No Name in*

the Street refer to Albert's belongings in this manner: "I'll pull onto the pavement a bit. Less distance then to carry his bits of rammel" (488). The shared community of meaning also traverses Sillitoe's textual Nottingham, Alice's use of a stock phrase in the story mirroring its propagation in the 1968 work *Revenge*. Embarking upon their relationship late in life, she laughingly remarks to Albert "Every old sock finds an old shoe!" informing him that "a friend at work" used the expression when they were discussing him. In Sillitoe's earlier story, the protagonist refers to his belated marriage in the same way, noting that "every old sock finds an old shoe, as those at work laughingly put it" (229). This echoed colloquialism obviously resonates outside the text in actual northern space, but its repetition within the body of Sillitoe's work additionally establishes linkage between the northerners inhabiting it.

Sillitoe's most profound expressions of aesthetic reflexivity are apparent in his distinctive "ordinary" language play, and we have already observed the sparse intensity of Arthur Seaton's linguistic performances in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. This approaches the sublime in *No Name in the Street*, in which one of the removal men advises Albert to treat the bite inflicted upon him by his dog lest he contract "scabies." Having been corrected by his companion, the character delivers the following exquisite northern couplet: "Scabies or rabies or fucking babies, I don't care. But he'd better get summat purronit, I know that fucking much!" (490). Sillitoe succeeds in capturing the resonance, rhythm, grimness, and humour of dialect performance perfectly in these lines, the communicated sound resonating like poetry to the insider ear. Aesthetic reflexivity, conscious of where the accent excels, conveys both the realism and poetics of northern language to the associated reader in a manner both pleasurable and affirming of attachment. It is this localised speech that perhaps for Sillitoe provides an element of

continuity across a changing North and northernness, and promises the persistence of distinct regional identities. In his 1981 work *The Fiddle*, he describes the demolition of the traditional terraced houses that, as Hoggart notes, constitute the very bones of settled northernness, but concludes with some optimism that “[t]he people have known each other for generations but, when they are moved to their new estates and blocks of flats, they will know each other for generations more, because as I listen to them talking, they speak a language which, in spite of everything and everyone, never alters” (546).

The gradual fading of the “New Wave” in the public and literary consciousness is evident in the reception of Stan Barstow’s sequel to *A Kind of Loving*. In his autobiography, the writer expresses consternation that *The Watchers on the Shore* “sold a fraction” of the novel published six years earlier: “I simply could not believe, that, of the 450,000 buyers of *Loving*, such a small proportion were interested in finding out what happened to Vic and Ingrid afterwards” (*In My Own Good Time* 200). The way in which Barstow articulates this comment suggests the continuing relevance of his characters within the northern insider community to which they belong, but primarily illustrates the relative literary indifference encountered by “New Wave” writers attempting to continue their work in the wake of that flurry of journalistic attention. Before addressing the remaining volumes of the Vic Brown trilogy, I shall turn to Barstow’s 1962 novel *Ask Me Tomorrow* in which consideration of this “northern writing phenomenon” and the complexities of belonging and identity intertwine.

The novel opens with the broadcast of aspiring author Wilf Cotton’s short story “The Man in the Dark” on local radio, and Barstow’s meta-reflexive framing of textual northernness immediately elevates the narrative above simple autobiographical allegory. Both writer and writer-character demonstrate consciousness of the genesis and reception

of northern text and authorship, frequently appearing to exchange the insider “sideways glances” noted by Peter Hitchcock in his analysis of working class fiction. Cotton, though proud of the recognition his work has gained, is critical of the all-purpose northern voice applied to the script by the B.B.C. “for” regional consumption: “the dialect in the dialogue exchanges ... was more true to the Lancashire border country than the miners’ Yorkshire” (12). Though the “New Wave” novels did much to situate an amorphous “regional” in concrete northern space, the obliviousness of outsiders to the specificities of a diverse North is a recurring element in Barstow’s later fictions of departure in which the South confronts “escaped” northern characters. This shared awareness of northern textual reception is particularly evident as Barstow writes Cotton contemplating his own writing, capturing the attachment conferred by the inscription of a specifically northern identity, yet perhaps contesting the veracity of Cotton’s interpretation: “his was an authentic world, his people harsh and dour, without the comic idiosyncrasies designed to appeal to the illusions of people who had never travelled north of the Trent” (199). Does Cotton’s early, unpublished writing (as rendered by Barstow) ascribe a settled Black literary northernness to its characters in his anxiety to render a realistic north in opposition to external constructions? Intriguingly, Will Cotton resurfaces within the community of Barstow’s north, affording opportunities for further interactions with northern writing in *The Watchers on the Shore*, and we shall re-examine the meta-reflexivity associated with northern texts within and surrounding the novel in the context of that work. Conceivably though, Barstow has acknowledged the “Lowryscape” quandary by textualising and interrogating that very process of writing the North within a northern text.

Cotton's positioning as a northern writer within *Ask Me Tomorrow* raises more pertinent questions of attachment and identity however, contributing to the referentiality between its intratextual and real world authors. Whilst Wilf strives to present the realism of the pits as lived by his father's generation in "A Man in the Dark" (12), his brother Harry disputes both his claim to this iconic northern identity and the appropriateness of the "non-ordinary" writer role: " 'What the hell do you know about it anyway? You've never done a day's work underground.' It was the last infantile dismissive retort from a man in a man's world to one who was a slightly contemptible, if necessary appendage to the real business of earning a living" (22–3). His fellow miner Ronnie Betley interprets the text as of ideological value, a northern writer showing "outsiders what it's like to work in t'pits for a living" (21), but Wilf acknowledges that it is intended "[f]or his father, more than any one person" (12), suggesting a desire to write with an inward, north-facing gaze. The character's literary identity markedly incorporates and embraces his northernness, highlighting the problematic situation of the "escaper author," as described by Philip Dodd. When asked why he relocated within the North to work on his novel rather than heading for the cultural epicentre of London, he replies that "the life up here is what I want to write about and I don't see any point in leaving it yet" (118). Cotton thus appears to pin authentic northern textual expression at least partially to geographical location, and significantly Barstow himself was one of the few "New Wave" authors who was not lured south by his success, as Colin Wilson notes in his account of the period: "Unlike John [Braine], he had the good sense to remain true to his Yorkshire roots and stay there" (104). Barstow also confronts his protagonist with the media phenomenon encircling his own writing, the privileged Stephen remarking "A writer, eh? One of those kitchen-sink types, I suppose." Cotton's fellow lodger Marguerite provides an "ordinary" counter to

the dismissive catchphrase: “If you mean he writes about what he knows and he’s lived a lot nearer the kitchen sink all his life than you have, yes he is” (137). Deliberations regarding place and its literary representation encompass questions of both entitlement and restriction in much the same way as belonging and liberation colour migrations away from northern space, and the post-“New Wave” texts characteristically engage with this complex, contradictory attachment both narratively and across their production and reception. As Wilf’s mother sagely remarks during his visit home, “You can’t have your independence, as you call it, and your mother’s pies as well” (172).

Though the authorial and literary interactions within *Ask Me Tomorrow* are conspicuous and absorbing, they do not detract from the sensitive exploration of belonging at the heart of Barstow’s narrative. The situation of Marguerite as a returning northerner provides a potent reagent around which the complexities of northern identity can be propagated and analysed. Having been rendered “accentless” (123) as a result of her upbringing in the South, Marguerite is perceived as an outsider by the inhabitants of the West Riding town she was born in. Her colleague Brenda accuses her of being “skittish and sarcastic with your London ways,” provoking a forceful critique of ascribed regional identities:

Just because you’ve never been farther south of Sheffield yourself you don’t have to start this North and South business with me because I’ve lived in them both. For your information I was born right here in this city and I lived here for the first nine years of my life. And I could tell you things about one Northcountry childhood that would make your hair curl.
(77)

Marguerite’s assertion of northernness is significant, disrupting established binaries of place-based identity and obliging the insider community within and outside the text to examine determinants of belonging. Does birth, residency, or ancestry confer

northernness upon an individual, and can this identity be lost or acquired? Dialect is once again the critical factor in this encounter, and we have repeatedly observed intensification of northern voice by characters “de-northed” by education and other outward mobility, but Barstow’s apparent critique of the complacent reflex northernness exhibited by Brenda again questions the validity of an avowedly “traditional” northern identity. Marguerite’s self-referential incorporation of the established “Northcountry childhood” narrative simultaneously affirms her entitlement to northernness whilst destabilising hackneyed, sentimental tales of grit amongst deprivation. The “returner” character is also highly attuned to changing northern place, noticing that “European-style cafés” are replacing the “pork pie and peas” of her youth (81), and the renegotiation of attachment necessitated by her absence from the North is achieved via a more self-aware engagement with and interrogation of the identities bound to it.

The narrative brings Wilf and Marguerite together as northerners navigating their relation to changing place, and their affectionate and self-reflexive play arguably constitutes the novel’s most illuminating and expressive performances of northernness. Akin to Mrs. Cotton’s “meat an’ tattie pies” (172) and the omnipresent pint mug of tea, iconic northern food reconnects the estranged Marguerite with her childhood identity, additionally binding the reader to the moment of communal northernness through her remembered dialect expression. Enjoying their supper of bread and dripping, she exclaims “Mmm, it’s delicious. Mucky fat. It’s years and years since I’ve had any,” amusing Wilf with her incongruous use of “north-country expressions” in a “refined voice.” Marguerite, aware of this discordance of identity informs him that “[i]t wasn’t always, I can tell you. There was a time when I talked as broad as anybody” (123). Stuart Maconie has noted that such “northern emblems” both define and somehow restrict

northerners (144), and (self) association with “grim” foodstuffs such as tripe, cow-heel, and black pudding undeniably plays into the unreflective stereotyping indicated by Russell, but its authentic function in Marguerite’s reattachment to the North appears more than symbolic. The “ordinary” also features in the couple’s exploratory performances of northernness, Cotton situating himself in humbly proud opposition to the boss’ son Stephen, who is accompanying Marguerite to a dinner dance: “ ‘When you go out with me it’ll be a half-crown seat in the stalls and a fish and four-penn’orth of chips from Wilson’s Deep Sea Fisheries.’ ‘And I’ll wear my best haircurlers,’ Marguerite said” (133). Her reply, though continuous with the thread of humour in Wilf’s performance, seems to align their northern “ordinary” whilst playfully interrogating its “settled” imagery.

Unsurprisingly though, it is absence of dialect that fundamentally fractures Marguerite’s northernness, and its re-performance ultimately brings her a degree of solace. Reaching a moment of crisis in her process of renegotiation, Marguerite “felt utterly lost, devoid of roots. She seemed deprived of identity, so that she didn’t know who or what she was” (150). Her identification of dialect as the remedy to this separation accentuates Barstow’s explicit association of identity with place: “She wondered if Wilf would let her in if she tapped at his door; if he would let her sit and be comforted by his presence and the sound of his dry West Riding voice” (151). The novel concludes with an exceptionally poignant performance of dialect, revealing the interplay between the self-conscious, semi-humorous, and authentic, emotional aspects of northernness. Marguerite mentions to Wilf that as a child in Gloucestershire she was initially “too proud” to abandon her northern accent, but after some time her natural voice became localised:

‘I only switched back to Yorkshire occasionally to make people laugh.’ ‘Do it now,’ he said. She put her hand to his cheek and looked at him with her lovely eyes. ‘Ah luv thee, lad,’ she said. He was suddenly inexpressibly

moved. He took her hand and pressed his mouth into her palm. ‘Darling. Darling Marguerite.’ (213)

I have suggested that the continuation of Vic Brown’s narrative by Barstow in *The Watchers on the Shore* (1966) and *The Right True End* (1976) could perpetuate the “gossip” of a northern insider readership, but it is his chronicling of the character’s southern displacement and relation to a north undergoing transformation that is of primary interest. In addition, the intertextual encounter established between Vic Brown and Wilf Cotton introduces meta-reflexive elements that, as in Barstow’s earlier novel, engage characters and author with the journalistic “cultural event” and the inscription of northernness. Reading across the concluding volumes of the trilogy whilst remaining attentive to the decade that separates both their narratives and publication, I shall examine Brown’s augmented self-reflexivity, performed against landscapes shifted from the axis of “traditional” northernness both topographically and culturally, before concluding with a discussion of the confluence of Barstow’s discrete works and their resultant transcending of the “New Wave” itself.

Following his resignation to marriage with Ingrid at the close of *A Kind of Loving*, Brown travels south to visit his former colleague Conroy, who is now working in Essex. He is initially surprised at this foreign territory’s evident lack of exoticism, remarking that “I can’t see anything that straight away tells me I’m two hundred miles from home,” but then interrogates his assumed north-south binary: “... what did I expect? That people two hundred miles south of Cressley would have two heads or four eyes and talk a lingo I couldn’t understand?” (48). When the pub barmaid asks Conroy if his companion is “from up there as well” however, Brown experiences a southern-centric articulation of this dualism, and notes the purposeful intensification of dialect with which Conroy asserts

his identity on non-northern ground: “ ‘Aye, he is that, luv,’ he says, laying on the Yorkshire.” He also informs Brown that the barmaid “[t]hinks all Yorkshiremen come from Bradford” (48), reinforcing the axiom that the South is oblivious to distinctive northern place. Whilst maintaining his characteristic realism, Barstow raises the pitch of such interactions to an almost farcical level when Brown finally moves south and meets his landlady Mrs. Witherspoon. Exchanging a sideways glance with the insider reader, both he and Brown humorously interrogate southern ignorance of the “provinces,” playing on ingrained assumptions of bleakness and deliberately positioning a Lancashire city in its rival county:

‘I expect you’ve had snow already.’ ‘Only in Scotland, I believe. I come from Yorkshire.’ ‘Yes, of course. You’ll find it a pleasant change to live here after being cut off every year.’ ‘I live in an industrial town, Mrs Witherspoon. It’s only the villages and farms on the moors that get cut off.’ ‘Oh, how strange. But I should have known. I had a sister who lived in Yorkshire for a time. I visited her once at her house in Manchester.’ (77)

Similarly, the northern reader is able to share a wry smile with Brown and Conroy when the southern actress Donna introduces the pair to the now successful playwright Wilf Cotton, commenting that “[y]ou’re all from the same part of the world. Tykes, isn’t it?” The appellation, used self-referentially by inhabitants of Yorkshire but excruciating when applied by an outsider, is greeted with raised eyebrows from Cotton and a muttered “if you like” from Conroy (199).

Such oppositional performances of northernness against a dominant South have been identified within many of the northern texts consulted previously, but Barstow’s attention to the nuances of their articulation often reveals the complexity of what appears to be a superficial antagonism. In *The Right True End*, an accomplished, cosmopolitan Vic Brown nevertheless acknowledges “some lurking trace of Yorkshire thrift” that prevents

him from taking a taxi back from the airport (86). When the firm's accountant Hedley Graham subsequently queries his expense claim, it is this northern identity in combination with its southern promulgated stereotype that he wields in confrontational performance. Challenging Graham with an archaic dialect term that serves as an initial indicator of their regional disparity, Brown states that he "couldn't thoil paying six or seven quid ... to ride in solitary state" before explaining that "thoil" is "an old northcountry word" that means "abide." Turning the ascribed Yorkshire trait of miserliness back on the southerner and incorporating another dialect term to assert his northern identity, he continues "[w]e're so tight with brass up there, as you might have heard—other people's as well as our own—that it now applies solely to spending money." Brown's concluding thrust reverses southern assumptions of northern barbarity, semi-humorously assailing the accountant with a proud northern heritage sustained in and by language: "When the Danes first brought it in it referred to people as well. 'I can't thoil people who quibble about my expenses,' we might have said" (105).

Barstow's work also illustrates the renegotiation of simple oppositional binaries by characters venturing out of northern space, and indeed navigating attachment to a changing north. In his relationship with Donna, Brown frequently engages in linguistic play that emphasises his northernness, yet asserts his identity in a less confrontational manner. His dialect performance at the conclusion of *The Right True End* is intended to conceal his awkward expression of emotion, but also strikingly positions his northern identity against a more utilitarian, impersonal voice: "I take a deep breath. 'Why don't tha gi' thi' mother a ring an' tell her tha're stoppin' aht terneet?' 'What was that?' 'Why don't you telephone your mother and say you're with some friends at a party and you're staying up town tonight?'" (239). In *The Watchers on the Shore*, Brown also employs

performed language to enchant Donna, though in a more lighthearted manner than was the case with Oliver Mellor's visceral vernacular utterances, or Joe Lampton's cynical seduction of Susan Brown. Nevertheless, incorporation of a refashioned and highly localised dialect term marks his speech as a reflexively northern act: " 'We'll stroll down, call in the first nice pub we come to for a sneck-lifter—' She swings round, her mouth open with delighted surprise. 'A what?' " After explaining that in Yorkshire a door-latch is referred to as a "sneck," he reveals his adaptation of the phrase—conceivably to a more affluent north: " 'I use it for the first drink but I think it really means a couple of bob to get you out of the house' " (187). Barstow's concluding volume sees the couple evidently accustomed to a playfully communicated northernness, Brown wishing that Donna had accompanied him on his return visit to Cressley: "a little frown between her eyes as Willy and I lay on the Yorkshire thick for her benefit, the grin eventually breaking through as she realizes she's being gently sent-up" (60).

The narrator's commentary on his manipulation of dialect when interacting beyond the insider community is indicative of the self-referential northernness reinforced by geographical dissimilarity, but transformations within northern space also heighten expressions of identity. On returning to Cressley in *The Right True End*, Brown remarks with intensified dialect on the inferior quality of both southern beer (29), and fish and chips—"Nay Willy it's the same as their ale, lad. They seem to like it that way" (61)—the familiar northern flavours of food and accent apparently facilitating the "escaper's" re-articulation of identity. However, other aspects of his hometown's apparently settled northernness have undergone change, and in the previous volume he acknowledges that the faux-traditional is not a purely southern trend: "Lots of pubs in the North have been slicked up in this fashion, with imitation beams, stone fireplaces and timber that's nailed

to plaster and doesn't support a thing" (48). Conroy too, negotiates a changing northern identity, defending his adoption of the "rich man's game" of golf by means of a semi-humorous, northern appropriation of the non-ordinary: "Come off it, mate. All kinds of people play nowadays. Haven't you seen the colliers on the course up north?" (79). In the 1970s north of *The Right True End*, Brown reflects on the metamorphosis of emblematic northern landscapes and the attendant reconfiguration of the "grim" that sustains attachment to them. He observes the casting off of Black identity by a cityscape born of, but blighted by northern industrial power, "the sandblasted stone of the older buildings, pale honey-colour after three-quarters of a century of black grime." The renaissance of northern space promised by this unmasking of the town's distinctive architectural heritage would seem to render the "grim" redundant in expressions of post-industrial belonging, but as Brown notes, demolition of Blackened landscapes is the more usual means of evolution. In the narrator's opinion, if the town planners concentrated more on "altering and modernizing, instead of knocking everything down and replacing it with concrete which weathers with dingy stains and looks slummy before it's been up ten minutes, we might at least have a town that both kept its character and was good to look at" (138). Belonging is complicated in this modern post-northern space, the "grim" forced to bond with the featureless, uniform Grey England that has effaced the heroically ugly Black. Bereft of the identity-affirming extremity of industrial northern landscapes, "grim" humour falls rather flat in negotiation of characterless place, though arguably the unrelenting bleakness of post-1960s northern towns "modernised" into deserts of concrete has provided the substrate for a reconfigured "grim" in later decades.

Transformed place necessarily precipitates changes in identities bound to it, and Brown's lengthy absence from the North and eventual return visit in *The Right True End*

demands substantial reevaluation of his performed relation to that space. At the novel's outset, he asserts an enduring core northern identity, despite the dislocation associated with his move south: "We used to have some sayings among us when I was a lad up north (As though, when it comes down to it, I've ever been anything else!)" (18). Nevertheless, as an "escaper" the act of leaving the North is instrumental to his self-realisation, despite the ease with which he reconnects with that primeval place on his return:

Well, this is my home town, and standing here drinking among the familiar accents, it's Longford, with Donna gone, that seems the strange and faraway place I ought to try to forget. But I know it's the place I must go back to, because out there is where I've got to come to terms with myself, not here on square one. (29)

Though separated from northern place Barstow's character achieves a relatively successful transposition, his performances of identity neither effaced by lack of attachment nor reduced to oppositional stereotype. Indeed, his reluctance to affect a southern accent even after ten years suggests an essential, internalised northernness adaptable to changing place both geographically and within the northern space that engenders it. When asked if speaking in a recognisably northern accent bothers him, he answers "Not as much as trying to say 'larst' and 'barth'. That makes me sound awfully phoney. To my ears, at any rate" (91). The specificity of place that ultimately defines northernness remains problematic for individuals distanced both geographically and temporally from an affirmed north however, and Brown's return to his hometown of Cressley eloquently communicates this fractured belonging: "On the Yorkshire side, the yielding valleys, the scattering of buildings on the high spurs, and the towns lower down, open in me an unexpected ache for a life and a place I know I can never return to find till I'm able to bring my own peace of mind with me" (216).

To conclude my reading of Barstow's post-"New Wave" novels, I shall return to the meta-reflexive engagement with the "northern writing phenomenon" observed in *Ask Me Tomorrow*. We have already noted the appearance of its writer-protagonist Will Cotton in Vic Brown's north, but interactions between these characters, the texts within and outside Barstow's text, and the "New Wave" itself are significant to an examination of literary northernness. Brown is positioned as an insider reader when in *The Watchers on the Shore* he informs Donna that he knows Cotton's play "Day after Day" and affirms it as "bang on" and "the real genuine article" (144). As they discuss the contemporary cultural climate, Donna remarks that "regional accents are in ... [i]t's what being written," and that as an actress she is willing to "have a go at 'Eeh, by gum' along with anything else" (143). This outsider appropriation of northern dialect—both in her immediate response and implied theatrical performance—provokes Brown to question external reception of northern texts and the problematic interpretation of the "settled northernness" that such writing engages with: "You're like everybody else—you think we all walk about in cloth caps looking bloody gormless. Every house with a euphonium in the wardrobe and a whippet in the scullery" (143). The character's awareness of textual manifestations of the North and distortions introduced by "New Wave" readings of them is also evident in an earlier exchange with his mother. Alluding to the "scholarship boy" paradigm, he comments that she has "been watching too many television plays" when she complains that her younger son has had "no room for his parents" since leaving for university (35–6).

Unsurprisingly, the northern writer Cotton also engages with the changing "New Wave" climate, noting that "the tide's on the turn" and "[p]eople won't take north-country working-class stuff for its novelty value any more. It's got to be good in its own right" (199). The playwright has also revised his relation of writing to place following his

relocation to the South, remarking to Brown and Conroy that “[s]ome like to stick close to their material and others benefit from shaking the provinces off their back for a bit and seeing the thing in perspective” (199). Appearing in a novel published several years after the decline of media-driven fascination with the North, his statements resist the reduction of both fictional and actual authors to a one-dimensional “regional,” and interleave with Barstow’s own experience as a “northern writer.” In his autobiography *In My Own Good Time*, Barstow recounts how a publicity photographer suggested posing him “sitting on a doorstep in shirtsleeves and braces,” fulfilling the “preconceived notion of what a north-country working-class novelist should look like” (87), which in turn recalls the “Lowryscaping” of the northern artist in John Wain’s *The Contenders*. Cotton’s work also interacts with so-called “angry” and “kitchen sink” plays occupying the literary sphere of Barstow’s novel, the playwright mentioning that he had “just heard somebody say it’s not as good as *Look Back in Anger* and somebody else who thinks it’s streets ahead of *A Taste of Honey*” (211). The author’s referencing of John Osborne and Shelagh Delaney—the latter an unmistakably “northern” and “New Wave” contemporary—situates his fictional author in a space that traverses multiple layers of textuality. Similarly, in *The Right True End* Vic Brown’s synopsis of the “New Wave” film *The L-Shaped Room* (based on the 1960 novel by Lynne Reid Banks) provides a startling intersection of writing and reality within the North of that period. Brown finds the narrative “a bit too near home,” echoing his own kitchen sink drama, and appears to render “ordinary” this cinematic elevation of everyday reality in his summary: “It’s about this bird who’s pregnant by a bloke she doesn’t want to marry ... Then, of course, it all turns out sad in the end” (54–5). Both author and character appear to gently mock the media’s identification of northern writing

with a mundane homeliness that reduces complex textual expressions to a soap opera script equally applicable to Brown's tale of domestic strife in *A Kind of Loving*.

This marked intertextual referentiality appears incongruous in novels purportedly "realist" in style, but the "Movement" and "New Wave" texts' situation in literary history between modern and postmodern genres proves informative in this respect. Whilst "New Wave" authors manifested specifically northern actualities in the rarified, restricted space occupied by modernist and metropolitan writers, the narratives were inlaid with their authors' and characters' consciousness of this distinct identity. Arguably, these voices asserting regional identity, inscribing its performance, and constantly interrogating their own and media constructions of those identities, express a conspicuous self-referentiality and meta-textuality characteristic of subsequent postmodern writing. My emphasis on the pleasurable play within dialect performances obviously borrows from Jean-François Lyotard's description of the localised "language games" typical of postmodernity, and the promotion of this "subordinate" voice to the literary by "New Wave" authors can be read as a challenging of the Standard English "metanarrative." In the arts, Lyotard notes the postmodern tendency to pastiche, in which preceding constructions are incorporated and recombined, in contrast to modernism's bulldozing of old and outmoded forms, and advancement of the "new." The interrogative northernness that I have identified within the "New Wave" novels conforms closely to this "working through" of past incongruities, and indeed, also questions the "one way" narrative of "traditional" northernness, adapting identity to a more fluid reality. Continuity with the "Movement" writers' earlier "ordinary" assault on their Modernist predecessors is intriguing in this context, particularly in the light of McGinn's contrast between these overly clever, somewhat awkward novels, and the more natural expression of the northern-asserted authors.

Clearly, the “New Wave” texts’ anticipation of the postmodern novel deserves recognition. But I would reiterate that their performances of northernness are entirely “sincere,” and playfulness and humour have long been fundamental to northern identity.

John Braine’s 1972 novel *The Queen of a Distant Country* also engages with the inscription and interpretation of northernness, revealing correspondences between the writer and the written within the text’s intersecting narratives. Before examining this richly self-reflexive text, I wish to briefly mention his earlier sequel to *Room at the Top* and reexamine its protagonist’s already tenuous attachment to northern space. *Life at the Top* (1962) finds Joe Lampton still in Warley, comfortable if not entirely content in his marriage to Susan Brown. His separation from the elemental north of his Dufton hometown is mirrored in his daily return from work: “I generally enjoyed my drive home, the quarter of Leddersford where the works were situated was so unimaginably, blackly, hideous, the contrast with Warley so extreme, that every day I renewed my enjoyment of Warley” (24). Less in awe of the Browns’ wealth and social position now that he has reached the top himself, Lampton remarks that he rarely notices the magnificent St. Clair folly that stands as a material reminder of Susan’s maternal ancestry: “all I know was that I no longer looked northwards as often as I did. I looked southward to Squirrel Gorge now” (13). Whether Braine’s conscious intent or not, this resituating of gaze early in the novel provides an irresistible indicator of the character’s further detachment from northern identity. The narrative details Lampton’s subsequent failed southbound “escape” from both his marriage and job, and though he merely resigns himself to the north that holds him (157), his attitude to the demolition of “traditional” northern space complicates this belonging: “soon it was all coming down. There wasn’t really anything else to be done with Leddersford, everything had gone too far for repair, everything was too black,

too dirty, too old, too badly planned; there had to be a new city, but who would live in it when they'd built it?" (51). This most problematic of northern protagonists clearly expresses the fracturing of attachment accompanying changes in landscape, questioning the very essence of northernness in post-northern space.

As noted, Braine turns his attention northward in *The Queen of a Distant Country*, despite having departed his native Yorkshire. His contemporary Colin Wilson explicitly links this relocation to a reduction in the writer's relevance—at least for an insider readership—stating “[i]n 1966 John decided to flee from the cotton mills of the north and throw in his lot with the immoral southerners of the stockbroker belt. Now, novels like *The Crying Game* and *Stay With Me Till Morning* were about bed-swapping suburbanites in whom I found it difficult to take an interest” (180). Certainly, the North does not appear foremost in Braine's post “New Wave” output, but his 1972 novel provides a profoundly self-referential exploration of northern identity in its real-world and textual manifestations. Describing a writer's return to the North of his youth, the work, like Barstow's *Ask Me Tomorrow*, is obviously embedded within autobiographical and literary discourses, but I shall turn to the performances of northernness within the narrative itself prior to an analysis of its meta-textual aspects.

The novel's protagonist Tom Metfield describes processes of change that have confronted the places and people of his north in the years between his authorial debut and subsequent move to the South. His Yorkshire hometown, Charbury, provided a solidly northern backdrop for his early writing as a “a large industrial city which used to have an abundance of Victorian buildings and which in consequence did have a surly individuality.” However, “redevelopment” of the city has stripped it of both its “grimness” and Northern English character so that it now “resembles Detroit without Detroit's crude

energy” (24). Metfield indicates that aspects of his own distinctive northern identity have been effaced as a result of his separation from northern place: “I waited for five minutes to let the tea brew—mash I would have said once” (9). Such linguistic transformations were evident even to the younger Metfield whose “ambitious” girlfriend Cora adopts a Standard English pronunciation that corrupts the natural resonances of dialect that bind her to northern place: “all her a’s were broad and her other vowels were narrow; the broad a’s sounded merely affected, but the other vowels were positively grotesque.” Metfield’s distaste for this inauthentic performance of language recalls Billy Fisher’s mockery of his own girlfriend’s “College of Commerce” intonation, but his critique incorporates a more subtle reclamation of normative speech. Noting that Cora overcorrects her native broad vowel sounds, he advances northern pronunciation as “standard” for certain words pointing out that “*bush* and *butcher* have a full u, indeed a Yorkshire u” (118). This challenge to southern dominance, though seemingly trivial, constitutes a renegotiation of northernness able to accommodate such incursions and question the premise of linguistic uniformity. Indeed, Cora’s reversion to northern colloquial usage on her first date with Metfield presents a crucial reminder that “northern” and “post-northern” should not be reduced to a simple dualism. Having announced her arrival with the exclamation “frightfully sorry”—which as Metfield notes is “a word made to order for her accent”—she later responds to his question “what if it rains?” with an “ordinary” stock phrase performance: “[y]ou’re not sugar, you won’t melt.” Metfield is conscious of the effect of her more authentic expressivity: “She wasn’t attempting to speak Standard English any longer; even the quality of her voice became more pleasant as she ceased to push it out of its natural range” (133–4). His own consciousness of dialect performance is also evident when, ill at ease in the upscale Cochrane Lounge, he asks

Cora “What would you like to sup, love?” Commenting on his shift of dialect to a more intensely northern register, he notes that “*Sup* wasn’t the word I’d have used normally, but if I couldn’t be like the others it was better to be as different as possible” (134).

The novel engages conspicuously with literary representation of the North, and as I have already indicated, the work shares certain elements with Barstow’s depiction of a northern author writing from within the “New Wave.” In discussing the fictional Wilf Cotton, I maintained that the character was more than a mere autobiographical stand-in, and demonstrated distinct agency when interacting with northernness across the novels’ textual layers. This is also true of Tom Metfield, but Braine’s inscription of the northern writer is complicated by an explicit and unmistakable authorial self-referentiality, largely underperformed by Barstow. Notably, the literary careers of the Yorkshire writer and his textual counterpart differ sufficiently to inform the attentive reader that Metfield is *not* Braine—for example the seven years separating publication of their inaugural novels (203)—and thus despite the author’s situating of *Room at the Top* alongside his creation’s defining work, I would suggest that the novel intentionally transcends memoir. Rather, Braine permits his own texts to interact with those within *The Queen of a Distant Country* in order to amplify northern writing’s self-reflexive interrogation of performed regional identity. Referentiality spirals outward from the text as Metfield comments “most people confuse me with the heroes of my novels, particularly the first one.” Parallels between the experiences of the “New Wave” writers and the narratives of their fictional northerners have recurred throughout my analysis of the texts, but Metfield’s evocation of Joe Lampton—who for a reader of Braine’s work also requires no introduction—generates a dizzying “referential feedback” within the textual community of character, author, and reader. The writer remarks: “I don’t need to mention his name. It’s sufficient to say, that

unlike him, I'm not tall, I'm not handsome, I don't fuck everything that moves and I should be incompetent to earn any more than a bare living in the world of big business" (13). I began by pointing out that the discourse resists reduction to the biographical, but it is informative to align Colin Wilson's portrayal of John Braine alongside Metfield's "ordinary" distancing of himself from his protagonist, particularly as it reveals the author's real-world performance of northernness. Wilson recalls that Braine possessed "a certain underlying lack of self-confidence which he concealed by playing the bluff Yorkshireman, making wry jokes about his waistline, and referring to himself as 't Master'" (102). Successive exchanges between the textual and real-world northern spaces referenced within *The Queen of a Distant Country* include Metfield's connection of his and Cora's own story with the narrative of his first novel (and of course, the "actual" text occupied by Joe Lampton): "I used her in my first novel too—she was the model for the rich man's daughter whom the hero makes pregnant" (117). By means of this overlapping of northern storylines, Braine—and Metfield—question the "New Wave" aggregation of texts, inserting an "Every(AngryYoung)man" into authorial and protagonist positions across the interleaved texts. Metfield's literary mentor augments this interrogation of northern writing in her exhortation to the aspiring author: "Write a story about a young man just like you who does the decent thing. And who buggers his whole life up and buggers the girl's life up into the bargain" (178).

Braine's highly self-conscious analysis of northernness and its textualisation emphasises continuities between everyday performances of identity and the inscription of those identities. The writer as observer and textual enactor of external realities engages in a double or meta-process of northern performativity, both consciously yet authentically evaluating and expressing an identity engendered by place. For the young author

Metfield, the northern space of Charbury furnishes him with this attachment to the source of self-expressivity: “in that maze of narrow cobbled streets dominated by mill chimneys, I knew, though only half-consciously, that I’d found the kind of background which suited me best” (108). Dialect binds communities to these characteristic landscapes, and Metfield’s reception of the verbal is also twofold in its aspect: “My grandfather smiles. ‘Shall us get thee a new dolly, doy?’ he says to Amelia. *Doy* means darling; it’s generally used only with children. I note this” (109).

In common with many of his contemporaries, Keith Waterhouse reacquainted himself and his readership with a key “New Wave” protagonist subsequent to the waning of that media event. In his 1975 novel *Billy Liar on the Moon*, Waterhouse describes Billy Fisher’s relocation to Shepford, a characterless town on the outskirts of London. No closer to the metropolitan glamour that he dreamt of in Stradhoughton, Fisher compares this southern non-place to “a suburb of the moon” and a “no-mans land” where “nothing can ever happen” (86–7). Expressions of northern identity seem muted in this inhospitable space, the rich dialect and colloquialisms that he joyously engaged with in Stradhoughton replaced by a bland, southern jocularity. Fisher is conscious of this necessary performativity, but its lack of rootedness in specific place reduces the act to superficial chatter: “ ‘Don’t often see you in this neck of the woods,’ I said, slipping easily into the council-clerk patois. (If I’d wanted an A for Effort, I would have said ‘this particular hostelry.’)” (10). His mother, having moved south to join her married son following the death of her husband, also appears to enact “southernness” though Billy’s assessment of her performance suggests her more serious attempt to integrate with place and people. He notes her shift to southern voice when discussing his (characteristically imaginary) cat: “ ‘It’s a gad job they’re sapped to hev nine lives isn’t it?’ my mother

observed, smiling at Helen, and talking, for our guest's benefit, in what she thought was a Home Counties accent." Fisher's mental rejoinder plays on the southern pronunciation of "sugar"—possibly interpreted by the northern ear as an amusing obscenity: "short of pouring Helen a cup of tea and asking if she took shagger, she couldn't have been more hospitable" (37). Mrs. Fisher's deliberate modification of accent, as opposed to her son's cynical language play, appears to threaten the internalised northernness that as we shall see partially sustains Fisher in the foreign space of Shepford. Challenging his mother's assumed southern intonation and the very actuality of the South, he informs her "you frighten me when you say 'your home' like that, pronouncing the aitch, and 'your wife.' You make it sound as if everything's real, as if it matters, as if it's serious" (43–4).

The distorted rendition of southern pronunciation by the author also contrasts markedly with the naturalistic presentation of dialect in *Billy Liar*, additionally standing in counterpoint to the garbled trans-northern speech with which Fisher's colleagues mock his rarely unbridled northern inflection. Speaking to his mother on the telephone in his "normal speaking voice," Fisher is aware that the office secretaries will believe that he is "putting on a broad northern accent" providing them with "a windfall of flat vowel sounds ... to pick up and laugh at" (130). His apprehension proves warranted as Patsy confronts him with her rendition of the definitive Yorkshire traditional song "Ilkley Moor Baht 'at," and Hattersley delivers "a teeth-grating amalgam of Black Country, West Riding, and Mummerset" that demonstrates his ignorance of both Fisher's identity and northernness in general: "Eee, bah goom, lad, oi nivver knew yow cum from t'Yorkshire" (131). Waterhouse's portrayal of North-South confrontation is intentionally comical, but illustrates the problematic internalisation of regional stereotypes that Dave Russell

identified as a risk associated with performances of northernness, as well as the frequent amalgamation of diverse norths by individuals external to these spaces.

Overlooking its significant engagement with place, Ronald Paul criticises the novel in his survey of post-war working class fiction, stating that the “farcical superficiality” of Waterhouse’s sequel adds nothing to the original novel, and that Shepford “seems only another version of Stradhoughton” (62). However, Fisher’s irrepressible imagination casts the “settled” northern place of his youth as a replacement “Ambrosia”—the imaginary kingdom to which he repeatedly escaped in *Billy Liar*—providing critical insight into post-northern experience: “I had a whole country once ... now there’s only one town left” (21). This “northern utopia” is no longer fantastical, but a real, lost north with a defining iconography of “trams,” “wet streets,” and “the Corn Exchange.” Fisher admits as much: “It’s Stradhoughton, before they commenced to pull it down. Whoever would have thought I’d miss it?” (21). This nostalgia for a lost north would appear to confirm Philip Dodd’s critique of the fixation of “escaper” writing on a “lamented separation” from a “Lowryscape” north, but Fisher is fully aware of his renegotiation of northern identity. Echoing Councillor Duxbury’s performed affirmations in *Billy Liar*, he observes of his retrospective northern gaze “I felt like old men who could remember when you got change out of a pork pie for fourpence” (50). In a significant passage towards the end of the novel, he parses his mother’s desire to return to Stradhoughton, framing the problematic navigations required within a post-northernness: “But you don’t want to go back there, you just want to go back to some ordered existence you think you had once. So do I. And the Town Hall would be there, and the market hall, if they hadn’t pulled it down, and the arcades, and all those blackened buildings” (138). His Midlander boss Mr. Rainbell also expresses this pessimistic loss of identity associated with post-industrial

uniformity of place: “It’s a glass and concrete excavated ruin we’re living in, and if I were your age, I’d be out of it on the next train. Except, of course, that after the next train whisked you two hundred miles north, or a hundred miles due nor’ nor’ west or wherever, you’d walk out of the bloody station and find yourself back in bloody Shepford” (185). Though Waterhouse’s south-located Billy Fisher, dispirited by the lack of a sympathetic audience for his performativity, presents a less successful renegotiation of northernness, the novel is profoundly illustrative of the challenges implicit in a north that can be returned to but not preserved in place. Identities based on regional belonging are thus highly susceptible to reconfigurations of landscape and its associated communities, due in part to the dependency of the “grim” and “ordinary” on these aspects. Dialect performance, as we have seen in majority of post “New Wave” novels, provides an element of continuity within an internalised northernness, but the unhappily escaped Fisher, “a Dick Whittington in reverse” (18), finds himself without a listener.

Given that the “New Wave” designation is of questionable relevance to an analysis of works published subsequent to its demise, it is tempting to widen the survey of later northern texts beyond the five novelists associated with the corresponding cinematic movement. I shall limit myself however, to mentioning very briefly two significant writers whose later work, though marginal to the media event, coincides with “post-northern” discourse, before positioning Barry Hines’ 1968 novel *A Kestrel for a Knave* as a distinctly “intra-northern” text in my concluding chapter.

In *Lucky Jim*, Kingsley Amis presented a northern character conspicuous in his performance of the “ordinary,” but of limited self-referentiality. His introduction of London-dwelling northerner Jenny Bunn in the 1960 novel *Take a Girl Like You*, allowed the “outsider” author to explore a more consciously articulated northern identity in

confrontation with a southern audience. Though his protagonist's interactions with the suave Patrick Standish comically interrogate male-female as well as north-south binaries—"My God, you look tremendous, Jenny. How did the industrial North ever manage to come up with something like you?" (39)—Amis' depictions of external receptions of northernness are often remarkably nuanced. Martha Thompson, Jenny's southern landlady incorporates northern pronunciation, vocabulary, stock phrase, and characteristic grammatical tag in a single sentence that simultaneously mocks the young woman's regional identity and Standish's romantic prowess: "You'll have your work cut out, though, I imagine. She's a reet champion lass with her head screwed on and her legs together is our Jenny" (151). The novel's presentation of northernness, though broadly drawn, certainly supplements the more realistic and resonant representations of "insider" writers.

The novels of Sid Chaplin, a former miner from Durham in the north east of England, were "effectively overshadowed" by those of the "New Wave" authors, as Michael Pickering and Kevin Williams have noted (357). Though Chaplin had already published several works prior to the late 1950s media event, his most celebrated novel, *The Day of the Sardine* (1961), coincided with the dwindling of popular interest in "northern working class" writing. His engagement with northernness is equal in quality to any of the "New Wave" writers however, and Chaplin's work—along with that of the playwright Shelagh Delaney—deserves more detailed discussion than the cursory mention I make here. The novel's interrogation of "scholarship boy" and "aspirational working class" paradigms are familiar themes, but Chaplin's characters additionally confront regional identity in a self-reflexive manner common to the later "northern" texts. In an encounter reminiscent of but distinct from Billy Fisher's lampooning of Councillor Duxbury,

narrator Arthur Haggerston performs *within* his Uncle George's northern performativity, questioning the legitimacy of the eminent man's claim to the "ordinary." Identifying his uncle's mantra-like articulation of the phrase "that's my merit," Haggerston aligns his own performance in order to elicit and thus playfully engage with this dialect-heavy declaration of humble pride: "I always knew he was a faker and talked off a record, but this was just too good to be true ... I couldn't resist mouthing his signature tune in time with him—"That's my merit' " (43). A further illustration of the protagonist's awareness of northern performativity and its incorporation of the "grim" is provided when his dreams of "escape" are subjected to "ordinary" assault by his foreman, Sprogget: "There was a gun-metal sky and a sort of creeping mist that didn't improve the wreckage of factories, power-stations, and blasted earth. The river flowed like treacle. Sprogget was definitely cast for the part to play against this backcloth" (197). Chaplin's fully northern reflexive novel then, stands as a reminder that the "New Wave" was a media phenomenon removed from the texts that it attempted to aggregate.

Returning to the premise of this chapter, do the post "New Wave" novels inevitably communicate a corresponding "post-northernness"? I have indicated that in confronting spaces that are removed from an apparently "core" or "settled" north, a heightened *consciousness* of northern identity is apparent within their characters' performances, but that such separations complicate and potentially destabilise belonging to place. Journeys away from this north are accomplished with varying degrees of success—Joe Lampton and Billy Fisher resigning themselves in different ways to the effacement of their norths, whilst Vic Brown and Wilf Cotton reconstruct identities capable of traversing changed and even non-northern spaces. A "post-north" then does not imply "post-northernness," merely the critical acknowledgement of spatial and

temporal alterations in the relation of identity to the place that engenders it. Whether leaving geographical northern space, navigating its shifting physical and social landscapes, or interacting with other generations' attachments to place, it is clear that the associated performativity requires an audience. As the post "New Wave" narratives demonstrate, receptivity to these nuanced articulations of belonging is key, regardless of the listener's relation to the northern "insider community."

The "New Wave" authors' later work also exhibits a marked awareness of its status as "northern writing" incorporating contexts of its own production and reception, particularly in the corresponding real-world southern migration of these northerners as accomplished authors. Just as their characters are acutely conscious of identity as upheavals in society problematise northern place, so the now "unremarkable" post-phenomenon northern writers had to adapt to an accepted—if rather less celebrated—literary northernness and a reduction of audience for their written northern performances. The conspicuous intertextuality of their subsequent novels suggests an attempt to resolve the written North, and normalise the previously oppositional "genre" within the corpus of English literature. Indeed, a "post-north" may well encompass an apparent reversion to a less self-conscious or even "reflex" expressivity that rather takes itself for granted, and I shall explore this supposition in my discussion of Barry Hines' novel. Before leaving the north of the "New Wave" however, I should like to return to Keith Waterhouse's autobiography and contrast two of his "post-northern" observations. The then London-based author remarks of his "Northern Wave" contemporaries "we did not want to go on writing about the north for the rest of our careers, particularly since we no longer lived there and young regional writers were coming up who knew far more about the current scene than we did in our Shaftesbury Avenue watchtower" (145). The comment is

revealing both in its relation of writing to location, and caution not to reduce regional writers to their regionality, but more so when placed alongside Waterhouse's "ordinary" navigations of London. Describing a visit to a club that "went in for fancy cooking," the author recounts how he and fellow northern writer Willis Hall would "toss the menu aside and instruct the chef to make us plate-sized Yorkshire puddings with rabbit gravy, as served up for Sunday dinner back in Leeds ... although now washed down with claret instead of Tizer" (123). This seemingly commonplace nostalgia for honest home cooking incorporates northern performativity in its humbly proud negotiation of the lavish food on offer in the South, including reference to the dish-like batter puddings that surpass their miniature, non-Yorkshire imitations. Unlike his hapless creation Billy Fisher, Waterhouse appears to have successfully conveyed his northern identity out of the North.

Chapter VII

Conclusion: “I don’t know right. It just is that’s all”

The germ of this thesis originated in my dissatisfaction with readings that overlooked or did not fully engage with the “northernness” of literary works significant in that respect to my own sense of identity and belonging. Surveying critical interpretations of the “New Wave” novels revealed a number of forces that have impeded the acknowledgement of place in the texts, including the generalities of “working class” and “provincial,” and journalistic constructions of the “angry young man” and “New Wave” itself. Whilst exploring manifestations of regional identity, more contemporary place-based studies have not analysed specific textual representations in detail, neglecting interpretations available to the insider northern reader—particularly those situated in the “aesthetic.” In common with the performativity that it identifies, my argument for and application of this subjective reading strategy also turns back upon itself, questioning these initial constructs and demanding re-conceptualisation of “north” and “northernness.” The motif of “reflexivity” that I have employed to describe the complex set of gestures comprising northern identity encapsulates a similar self-referential perspective, and it is appropriate to re-read this exploration of the North’s literary expression in the context of these defining concepts.

I stated in my second chapter that distinctive place-based identities discernable in texts “of the North” were tightly bound to England’s “Black” industrial spaces. This fundamental, pan-northernness provided a means to negotiate the harshness of such

localities by articulation of the “grim,” conferring attachment through assertion of the “ordinary.” Undeniably, both aspects entwine with elements of urban working class culture, but linguistic singularity expressed via dialect renders such performances specifically northern. It is this definitive, highly localised characteristic that not only animates nuanced presentations of identity, but also signifies a thread of continuity within a changing North. Avoiding reduction of the “New Wave” novels to artefacts of mid-century social change, I acknowledged the complications presented by post-industrial landscapes and increased occupational and geographical mobility, noting their respective challenges to the “grim” and “ordinary” facets of traditional northern identities. Transformations of northern place and community demanded successive renegotiations of identity and attachment, and as contemporary critics observed, the “New Wave” writers addressed such themes in their narratives of aspiration, escape, and generational conflict. My own “insider” reading of the texts revealed an intensified, self-reflective northernness, interrogating itself through a conscious but uncontrived performativity. I maintained that the apparent “dissentience” of the “New Wave” novels was in part a process of reintegration conducted within the actuality of northernness, and that the richest textual manifestations of this process were overlooked as the media constructed phenomenon of “northern writing” waned. This “northern reflexivity” peaked in the texts of the “New Wave” writers, just as northern place itself reached a point of extreme self-consciousness as profound physical and social changes altered landscapes and communities. Northernness was seldom so visible and problematic, and though positioning a “natural” or “traditional” north against this reflexive state would be erroneous, its relative literary quietude before and after the “New Wave” underlines the significance of these novels to discussions of northern identity.

Applying this reflexive northernness to my own argument, it is evident that these complications of changing place and belonging necessitate a re-evaluation of the “Black England” demarcation and its associated tripartite identity. If northern place is no longer distinctly bleak and despoiled, and—as Billy Fisher and Vic Brown remarked following their relocation to the South—is largely indistinguishable from any other modernised urban space, where (and why) does the North begin? I was careful to note that “Black” spaces need only bear the *evidence* of industrialisation, but the erasure and reconstruction of northern landscapes has only accelerated since Fisher lamented the uniformity of Stradhoughton’s shop fronts half a century ago. Belonging and regional identity are also increasingly fractured in an age of social fluidity, where an individual’s ancestry, birthplace, and residency coincide less predictably. Even dialect, the very essence of northernness, is subject to loss or mutation for those leaving northern space, and assimilation by second-generation “outsiders” born in the North. In the previous chapter, I discussed the implications of “post-northern” space and identity, observing in the later “New Wave” narratives the capability of northernness to navigate disruptions to both its key elements and the location to which they provide attachment. Though such negotiations vary in their degree of success, and the problematic belonging associated with an “unsettled” north should not be underestimated, I remain convinced that the act of articulating northern identity incorporates traversal of these incongruities. In essence, a “core north” persists as a storehouse of signifiers, providing a touchstone for performances of northernness that consistently utilise the apparatus of “grim,” “ordinary,” and dialect. In stating this, I am aware of sailing dangerously close to Stephen Dodd’s “Lowryscaped” north, in which an idealised (albeit Blackened) conception of place and community impedes the re-forging of a more relevant attachment to that place’s reality.

Dave Russell has also noted the “generalised nostalgia” associated with the North in the national psyche, its now post-industrial spaces evoking the “salt of the earth” virtues of a lost communality (268). Key to my concept of “northern reflexivity” though, is the recursive self-interrogation that I have recognised as implicit in these articulations of identity. Northern stock is not merely re-presented by the performer; rather it provides the substrate upon which the performative “reaction” draws. At its simplest, this incorporates the intensification of dialect or “ordinariness” for the purpose of demonstrating identity to an “outsider” audience less attuned to northern cues, but as was apparent from the “New Wave” novels, creative recombination of elements and a degree of humour and linguistic play characterise fully reflexive articulations of northernness. I have stressed that this latter aspect is integral to northern identities and in no way diminishes their genuine expression, though as Russell mentions, by the mid 1960s the more conspicuous features of a “traditional” North had become something of a “comic staple” (269). I would agree that such performances risk becoming submerged within the prevailing postmodern ironic temperament.

Dave Russell’s comprehensive work *Looking North* has informed much of my thinking on northern identity throughout this study, and it is not necessary to speculate further on a subject that he has already convincingly elucidated. Rather, I should like to return to the textualised north that has been my primary focus and assess the “insider” close reading strategy applied to the northern literary corpus, re-examining the implications of problematic belonging for that reader. I have employed the dichotomy of “insider” and “outsider” freely throughout my analysis, suggesting that a distinct interpretative framework is available to the northern reader. This gross partition is obviously subject to complications corresponding to the North-South divide itself, but

conceived in terms of the general pan-northern sensibility that I have advanced, the term infers a degree of shared comprehension within the “community” of author, reader, and characters. This understanding, especially when rarefied to the aesthetic, is greatly increased when belonging to locality coincides around the text, allowing particularities of dialect to resonate fully. As Russell notes when discussing the origins of regional literature, dialect “gave the added dimension, binding groups together in a knowing conspiracy forged by the exclusion of outsiders and in the straightforward pleasure of seeing the world made sense of in their own tongue” (126). Sillitoe’s Nottingham and Chaplin’s Newcastle, though both located in northern space, offer specific reading experiences according to the reader’s attachment to those places, and engagement with the Midlands, Yorkshire, and “far North” texts certainly varied according to my own compound belonging. Whilst upholding this regional diversity, I would argue that the “insider” designation is meaningful in terms of the textual communication of northernness, though that status is inevitably complicated by the same navigations of attachment and identity that the “New Wave” novels so eloquently explore. This shared interrogation of northernness must, I feel, only bind the reader more tightly to the community around and within the text.

In the preceding chapter, I noted the sensitivity to the phenomenon of northern writing evident in “New Wave” authors’ later works. My self-conscious “insider” reading of the novels mirrors the deliberations of northern characters as readers, and of northern writers on both sides of the text. Analysis of the apparent “given” of place-based identity has proved to be a somewhat awkward endeavour, and connections between the frequently arduous negotiations of northernness performed by the “New Wave” protagonists and my own attempts to articulate its substance have been manifest. In

essence, the North is “ordinary,” and writing it is not—like J. B. Priestley, I have been conscious of northern voice’s admonishment to “behave thi’sen lad!” throughout the composition of this thesis. The subjective nature of an “insider” interpretation also questions the validity of my approach to the texts, and I am aware that many of my assertions relating to “the northern” appear merely declarative. Perhaps unsurprisingly, resolution is to be found in reflexive application of the North’s own “ordinariness.”

Returning to Geoffrey Moorhouse’s 1964 study of the “Other England,” the Lancastrian author’s defence of the “insider” perspective against accusations of sentimentality and selective remembering is instructive in this respect: “You may concede that more objective scrutineers from other parts have a point of view worth considering. But they never seem to have more than that. In the final analysis, you *know*, they don’t and that’s that” (113). This “just is” assertion of northernness, whilst seemingly an unsound foundation for critical discourse, actually marries the “ordinary” matter-of-fact quality of northern identity with the process of its self-definition. Hence, an instance of dialect usage is poetic or resonant to the “insider” reader “of itself” and as a result of the belonging it confers. This interaction between identity and self-representation is deftly expressed in northern music hall star George Formby’s comic song “A Lad from Lancashire” (1939): “They can tell I come from Lancashire, but they can’t tell me much.” Conceivably, the “ordinary” self-evident north provides a useful conceptualisation of the “reflex” state that I have attempted to position around the “traditional,” and I shall return to the “just is” when discussing Barry Hines’ *A Kestrel for a Knave* which suggested the phrase in its distinctive articulation of northernness.

Although “aesthetic” appreciation of dialect is necessarily subjective, the process of interpreting northern texts approaches the art of the translator in its attempt to

transcribe self-evident yet often intangible meaning for an external audience. Characters in both John Braine's and Stan Barstow's novels express the singularity of northern language, remarking upon meaning that could not be conveyed by any other words. For the insider reader, northern voice is "loud" in the texts of the "New Wave," and though the novels should not be reduced to "northern" in their totality, an insider close reading provides a significant additional layer of meaning. Focusing on the novels' northern aspects is informative, but more importantly these interrogatory, self-reflective texts reveal much about northernness itself—and are arguably unequalled in this respect.

As a brief epilogue to this thesis, I should like to venture beyond the works of the "New Wave" authors and examine an additional key "northern" novel published in the late 1960s. Though ten years the junior of these writers, Barry Hines shares a comparable biography as "northern author." A miner's son from the South Yorkshire pit village of Hoyland Common, he is best known for his 1968 novel *A Kestrel for a Knave* which like the "New Wave" novels, inspired an iconic cinematic release. Indeed, the arresting film still (subsequently used for the novel's paperback cover image) in which grubby young protagonist Billy Casper confronts the viewer with a two-fingered "V-sign" has gained currency as a defiant northern emblem in its own right. The novel's narrative voice is characteristically northern, and consonant with the realistic yet aesthetic style of the "New Wave" writers; the author's own dialect intermingling with that of his characters as we have observed in several of the preceding texts. Casper's older brother Jud provides an example of this communal northern speech when referring to his packed work lunch: "Jud's snap was still on the table, wrapped up in a cut bread wrapper ... The kitchen door banged open and Jud rushed through, panting. 'I've forgot my snap' " (22). "Traditional" northern dialect usage of the pronouns "tha" and "thee" and the possessive

adjective “thy” also characterises the text, though the incorporation of these words into more contemporary “stock phrases” suggests the re-accommodation of northernness noted in the “New Wave” novels. Again, Jud’s speech demonstrates this aspect as he chides Billy for his early rising: “what’s up wi’ thee, shit t’ bed?” (21).

Linguistically, Hines’ novel therefore provides attachment for the insider reader in a manner similar to the other northern texts that I have analysed. However, northern place itself appears somewhat indistinct in the work, and Stephen Wade has suggested that *A Kestrel for a Knave* represents a departure from the “regional” novels of the “New Wave” as a result of its location in a space that is “vaguely north” and where northernness is “is outdated or no longer important” (151). Wade bases his argument around the acknowledged disintegration of recognisably northern landscape and community that the text communicates, and admittedly the “featureless wasteland” (135) of anonymous new housing estates offers Casper (and the reader) very little purchase for belonging to place. I would counter however, that Hines’ representation of “post-northern” space and society maintains the realism typical of twentieth-century regional writing, and constitutes a process of resolving this undermined northernness comparable to the textual explorations of his “New Wave” contemporaries. What I do feel is distinctive about *A Kestrel for a Knave*, and arguably constitutes a turning point in northern literary expression, is the absence of self-reflective voice within the text. At no point does Billy Casper actively perform or comment upon his northern identity, and in this respect Wade’s claim that place-based identity has lost its significance appears justified. Taking into account that the novel’s protagonist is a materially and emotionally deprived fifteen-year-old boy and not one of the northern-asserted, aspirational young men of the “New

Wave” novels, I nevertheless still contest the assumption that Casper’s northernness has been eroded along with northern space.

My refutation hinges on the core aspect of Hines’ narrative, but also I believe summarises both this literary history of northernness, and the thesis as an instance of northern writing and scholarship in its own right. *A Kestrel for a Knave* details Billy Casper’s “escape” through his relationship with the hawk that he trains and is tempered by, and as noted by Wade, the protagonist derives belonging from “nature” rather than from place or people (135). Whist this revitalising “Green North” could be positioned against the alienation associated with Black or nondescript post-industrial spaces as Ronald Paul argues (174), to situate Casper—and by extension Hines’ “post-northern” text—as representative of a “natural” northernness would obscure the dynamic of renegotiation that operates within this ostensibly less performative novel. I proposed that the “New Wave” texts marked a highpoint in the expression of self-conscious northern identity, but concluded from a reading of earlier works that preceding norths should not be regarded as wholly “organic” and that performances were located along a continuum between “reflex” and “reflexive.” However, I would not align Casper’s inconspicuous northernness wholly within this construct, as the “post-northern” state does not imply a reversion to a less reflective sense of identity. The protagonist’s singular moment of self-reflexivity communicates identity through narration of “Kes,” the hawk that seems to embody this performance in its act of being. Casper’s teacher Mr Farthing asks why the bird is so special to him, to which he replies: “I don’t know right. It just is that’s all” (117). As stated above, this seemingly unspoken northernness suggests a continuing (“ordinary”) navigation of changing place, but may indicate an *accommodation* of this state of transformation and unsettledness rather than any final resolution. Hence this “quieter”

performativity embraces the “just is” actuality of northernness, having accepted the mutability of place and identity to which it is attached. I do not advance this as a culmination of northern identity, rather as a yet more complex “reflex with reflexivity inside” that incorporates performance but does not consistently narrate and interrogate itself. This “assimilated” northernness, accustomed to a state of flux, also seems to characterise writing subsequent to the “noisy” texts of the “New Wave.” This thesis has been a similarly voluble interrogation of self-identity, but concludes with the assertion that in essence, northernness “just is.” Gaining knowledge of that “is,” and the assurance to apply the “ordinary” to the scholarly has demanded a methodology “reflexively northern” in its own right.

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